

DISCOURSES

O N

SELECT PASSAGES

O F T H E

SCRIPTURE-HISTORY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By JOSEPH JENKINS, A. M. K

V O L. I.

——— *Ensamples — for our admonition, upon whom
the ends of the world are come. 1 Cor. x. 11.*

S H R E W S B U R Y :

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M DCC LXXIX.

129/13



T H E
P R E F A C E.

SUCH is the curiosity of the mind, such its love of novelty, and desire of knowing what has been done, and is doing in the world, that authors have found their account, in ransacking the stores of antiquity, collecting the transactions of modern times, and even calling in fiction to their aid, for the public entertainment.

There is this difference between sacred and prophane history, that the latter is often dubious, often mixed with fable, * often misrepresented, often uninteresting,

A 2

* It is allowed, that there are in the scripture, parables and allegorical representations; but I presume, none without sufficient intimation, that an allegory is designed. I can readily understand, also, how

interesting, often amusing rather than instructive, and often rendered pernicious,
by

how an allegory may consist with the language of poetry; but to suppose its insertion, without any previous caution, in plain narrative, seems to me greatly to unsettle the meaning of the scripture-history. I confess myself, therefore, not a little surprized, at a hint of the Rev. Dr. Price (in his *fast-day* sermon, from the same text with that page 171 of this volume) that the conversation, between the Lord and Abraham, concerning Sodom, was a "*parabolical representation*," contrived after the Eastern manner, p. 7.—Indeed the Doctor acknowledges it was "*founded on real facts*," only "*disguised and veiled by a mixture of allegory*," but he has given us no rules, whereby to distinguish between the fact and the disguise.—It is not a love of contradiction, but a regard to what I conceive to be the truth, that moves me to animadvert upon a sermon, the benevolent design of which will be obvious to all its readers. As the Doctor tells us, his remarks "should be attended to, in reading many of the other accounts in this book of Genesis," p. 8. I suppose it may be applied to every instance, wherein Jehovah is spoken of, as having had personal intercourse with his creatures. Let us then apply it to the story, of *Abraham offering up Isaac*. According to Dr. Price's theory, here is a mixture of *fact* and *allegory*, "after the manner of the Oriental nations in ancient times." The *allegory* is, that God commanded

by excusing the bad actions of men—
exalting their power at the expence of

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their

commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son, and Abraham obeyed. But what is the *matter of fact*, concealed underneath? Why it is only supposing, “ That Abraham and his son were upon business, “ in the land of Moriah—that Isaac sickened there “ of the small-pox, or some malignant fever — “ that, reduced to the point of death, Abraham, “ in the temper of his mind, resigned him to “ the will of God—that God restored Isaac, to “ the comfort of his aged father—and that Moses, “ willing to make the most of the fact, described “ it in language highly allegorical, after the Oriental manner.”—By this means the story may, without difficulty, be divested of the *disguise*, in which it is presumed to appear before the public. —But seriously, does not this indefinite introduction of fact and allegory, into the sacred history, give writers a liberty, of making the Bible speak just what they please? Does it not put an argument into the mouths of infidels, “ That even the advocates “ for the Bible deny not, that its history is next “ to impossible to be decyphered?” Does it not, moreover, weaken, if not totally undermine, the miraculous evidence adduced, in favour of divine revelation; and lead to the conclusion, that the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the appearance of God to Moses, upon which his mission was founded—the divine inspiration of the Prophets, who profess to have received a special commission

their humanity—and, under the varnish of encomium, concealing facts, which ought to be transmitted to posterity as infamous.—Sacred history, on the other hand, as recorded in the holy scriptures, may not only be proved the most certain and consistent relation of past events, and those as remote as the origin of time, but treats the characters handed down, with that freedom from bias and prejudice, which recommends it to every one, sincerely desirous of knowing things as they happened; and is, moreover, a wise selection of examples, calculated to illustrate and enforce those truths, which revelation uniformly teaches, to be nearly connected with the present welfare, and eternal felicity of mankind—*profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness.*†

In an age, therefore, wherein so much
of

commission from God; and the like facts, *did not happen as recorded in the word of God*; but are a compound of fact and allegory; and that (as a Deist would say) “We know not what is fact, “and what is *f. bulous*?”

† 2 Tim. iii. 16.

of the Athenian fondness of hearing something new prevails; wherein so many frivolous productions are dignified with the title of history, and read with approbation; wherein the embellishments of language are so frequently prostituted, to feed the corruptions of the heart, and deprave the morals of our youth, an attempt to engage the attention to the divine oracles, and suggest reflections which may be conducive to profit, will, I trust, be received with candor.

It has been my aim to give the narration, faithfully as it stands in the Bible, and at the same time, in as striking a dress as I could.—Sometimes a particular story, with the remarks upon it, has been found sufficient for a discourse; at other times, I have arranged several histories under one general head, because they are a confirmation, of the general truth therein contained.—Every particular history will not be expected, within the compass of these volumes.—The most remarkable are not omitted.—If the perusal of this work yields satisfaction to its promoters; if it is a means,

means, in the hands of God, of awakening any careless sinner — directing any humble enquirer — edifying the body of Christ, by persuading to a more composed trust in him, attended with a more lively zeal in his service — and, of course, bringing glory to God, my end will be answered — I shall not have run in vain, nor laboured in vain.

3 NO 63

E R R A T A.

Page 52, line 6, read *ever*.

86, l. 5, r. *obey*.

92, l. 11, r. *sickresses*.

100, l. 27, r. *if they do not, &c.*

127, l. 7, of the note, r. *Sabbath*.

212, l. 3, r. *of a parent*.

C O N T E N T S

O F T H E F I R S T V O L U M E.

D I S C O U R S E I.

The image of God in man.

GENESIS i. 27.

So God created man in his own image.

Page I

D I S C O U R S E II.

Adam, where art thou?

GENESIS iii. 9.

*And the Lord God called unto Adam, and
said unto him, Where art thou? 19*

D I S-

x C O N T E N T S.
D I S C O U R S E I I I.

Cain and Abel.

GENESIS iv. 6, 7.

*And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art
thou wroth; and why is thy countenance
fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou
not be accepted? And if thou doest not
well, sin lieth at the door.* 41

D I S C O U R S E I V.

Noah's Ark.

In two Parts.

GENESIS vii. 16.

— *And the Lord shut him in.* 65

D I S C O U R S E V.

Animal food permitted.

GENESIS ix. 3.

— *Even as the green herb have I given
you all things.* 99

D I S-

CONTENTS.

xi

DISCOURSE VI.

The confusion of tongues.

GENESIS xi. 6, 7, 8.

And the Lord said, Behold the people is one, and they have all one language, and this they begin to do; and now, nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth, and they left off to build the city.

118

DISCOURSE VII.

Hagar's motto.

GENESIS xvi. 13.

— *Thou God see'st me.*

145

DISCOURSE VIII.

The righteous a blessing to nations and communities. — A Fast-day Sermon.

GENESIS

GENESIS xviii. 32.

*And he said, I will not destroy it for
ten's sake.* 171

DISCOURSE IX.

Abraham offering up Isaac.

GENESIS xxii. 12.

— *Now I know that thou fearest God,
seeing thou hast not withheld thy son,
thine only son from me.* 205

DISCOURSE X.

Jacob's hasty conclusion.

In two Parts.

GENESIS xlii. 36.

— *All these things are against me.* 230

3 NO 63

DIS-

DISCOURSE I.

The image of God in man.

GENESIS i. 27.

So God created man in his own image.

WHEN a person has lost an unknown sum of money, in order to estimate his affairs justly, and calculate the greatness of his loss, it is proper to look back and consider what he was previously worth. And if he is reduced to poverty, the consideration of his former affluence and present necessity, may be a means of spurring him up to that diligence and activity, which are necessary to retrieve his affairs. Any one, then, who endeavours to possess him of an opinion, that his circumstances are as good as they ever were—that all is well, and he need not be alarmed or anxious, is not the distressed man's friend.—He buoys

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him

him up with a false hope—he deludes him, and prevents his benefit.

To apply this to my present design.—We have never had a personal experience of the dignity of man in his primitive state. That we may the better know, therefore, the greatness of the loss sustained by the fall, it is proper to collect all the descriptions we can find, of that state from which our first parents and their offspring fell. A thorough acquaintance with these facts, will lead us to see an amazing difference, between human nature now, and the state in which it was at first formed; and have a further effect, to excite to a serious enquiry after that great salvation, which raises sinners to a state even more glorious, than that which they lost.

No considerate person will doubt, that this is a desirable temper of mind.—He, therefore, who attempts to persuade us, that we have not fallen so low as the scripture represents, or that man was not at first so glorious a creature as it describes, would do well to reflect, whether he is the friend of mankind by talking in such a strain? Whether such talk has
not

not a tendency to make men easy in sin, from a fond imagination that their favourite indulgences are not sinful? Whether it does not blind their eyes, with an high conceit of their own excellencies — cause them to think lightly of Christ — and set aside the earnestness of the soul, in the awful concerns of religion?

That it has had this effect, is clear from observation.—They who have gone farthest, in denying *original sin*, have ever been the most forward to apologize for their own faults—the least sensible of their own defects—and the least solicitous, about the purifying influence of inward and experimental religion; while those, whom grace has made sensible of their innate depravity, have voluntarily acknowledged, and humbly lamented their imperfections, and gloried in the gospel, as a suitable relief for wretched and helpless creatures.

The effect of each system of principles is quite natural.—But for the most satisfactory account of the matter in debate, let us consult the oracles of truth.—In this chapter we are favoured, with the

4 *The image of God in man.* Dis. 1.

most ancient and authentic relation, of the creation of this world, and the formation of man its noblest inhabitant — that *God created man in his own image.* — And methinks we pay no compliment to our own discernment, to have low ideas of that image. — What a grand and august view must it give of the original state of man, to be told that God made him with his own hand, and in his own likeness! — It may be profitable to enlarge here, and endeavour to shew you,

I. Wherein, scripture declares, this image of God consisted. After which

II. I shall make some observations, for our improvement of the subject.

I. Then, in considering wherein this image of God consisted, it must be observed, that its principal though not only reference is to the soul of man. — His body was formed of the same materials as the brute creation; and though a more elegant structure, yet still is dust. His soul bore the resemblance of its maker, in many respects, some faint traces of which do yet remain. As

1. That

I. That it is *spiritual* and *rational*. — What a spirit is, indeed, we know not; nor is there any thing we understand less, than the nature of the soul within us, and how it pervades and actuates the body. — But this we are informed, that *God is a spirit*,^a and when he fashioned man, he breathed into him the *breath* or *spirit of life*,^b the inference from which account is, that the soul is an immaterial principle, distinct from the body, and so bears the resemblance of the father of spirits. — What principle actuates the brutes, we also are ignorant of. Scripture speaks of *the spirit of a beast*,^c in an inferior and more confined sense of the expression. But there is something, which abundantly distinguishes the spirit of man, and sets it above every part of this lower creation, that it is a *rational* soul, capable of comparing and judging, of chusing and determining, of perceiving the beauty of some, and the deformity of other things. — Reason is a spark of the Divinity infused into the mind. — By it we claim affinity with the skies. — God is the fountain of knowledge; and

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he

^a John iv. 24. ^b Gen. ii. 7. ^c Eccles. iii. 21.

he hath taught us more than the beasts of the earth. He is wise in heart; and hath made us wiser than the fowls of heaven.^d There is also,

2. Another particular, wherein this likeness to God consists. Our souls are *immortal*. — As God himself is everlasting, so he has formed the soul capable of living for ever. The Bible describes this property very emphatically, by the spirit of a beast going *downward to the earth*, and the spirit of a man going *upward*.^e The one perishes, the other survives the dissolution of the body. — There is reason to conclude, from the very nature of the rational soul, that, as it is a principle distinct from, so its destruction is not necessarily connected with that of the body. Our bodies are in a continual flux, “from that never-ceasing attrition which there is in every part of them.”^f It may be proved, that we have not the same, identical, body now, that we had a few years ago. But our remembrance of past times evinces, that we have the same soul. And why may not

^d Job xxxv. 11.

^e Eccles. iii. 21.

^f Butler's Analogy, part i. chap. 1.

not this soul exist, when the body perishes?
 “ We see by experience, that men may
 “ lose their limbs, their organs of sense,
 “ and even the greatest part of their bo-
 “ dies, and yet remain the same living
 “ agents;” and yet be able to talk, to
 reason and to remember. Why then may
 not the principle of reflection survive the
 wreck of the body, and live for ever? The
 Bible puts it past a doubt. *Christ Jesus*
hath brought life and immortality to light by
his gospel.^s That which philosophy could
 but feebly conjecture, and had, at best,
 but an imperfect and uncertain notion of,
 is here cleared up; that though mortality
 has entered into our frame, and we expect
 to leave this world, yet somewhere or other,
 we shall be to all eternity. This lamp of
 life shall never be exhausted, but be fed
 and upheld in existence for ever.

3. Another part, of the image and like-
 ness of God in man, consisted in *holiness*.—
 God himself is holy, and it is impossible
 but what he does must be holy. He is
righteous in all his ways, and holy in all
his works;^h and as the rational nature of

B 4 man.

^s 2 Tim. i. 10.

^h Psalm cxi. 17.

man made him accountable for his conduct, it is impossible, without great injustice to the attributes of God, to suppose that he formed the soul of man, without inclining it to holiness. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul, speaking of the renovation of the mind after the image of God, describes it as created *in righteousness and true holiness*.ⁱ—In this, indeed, the chief part of the likeness of the human nature to God consisted. God is *glorious in holiness*,^k and man, his creature, was like him, glorious. Hence Solomon assures us, that God *made man upright*.^l His understanding was clear and unbiassed by prejudice, so that he could discern the beauty of holiness; and, when his duty was presented to him, he at once perceived it. His will was submissive to God's will, to be and do whatever the Lord pleased, and, without any constraint, he chose the commands of his Maker. His affections were set upon God and things divine. He loved prayer, and praise, and communion with God. He meditated on him, and his meditations of him were sweet.

His

ⁱ Eph. iv. 24. ^k Ex. xv. 11. ^l Eccl. vii. 29.

frame. This will in part follow from what has been already suggested. The *soul* of man was in perfect harmony—no part jarring, or out of order—like a musical instrument, every string of which is in tune, there was no untoward passion to create discord, or irregular affection to distract and rend the soul asunder. His mind was fixed upon God as its principal delight. Formed for the company of the Most High, he drank daily out of the fountain of living waters. The Lord indulged him with his presence, and delighted over him to do him good. Must he not then have been happy? To add to his felicity his *body* was strong and healthy—free from pain, languor or uneasiness, and adjusted so as not to be an incumbrance upon the mind. He had none of the seeds or symptoms of death; nor felt any of those maladies that flesh is now heir to.—The *place* also, in which Adam dwelt by the appointment of God (the garden of Eden) was exquisitely contrived to promote his pleasure. It is called, by way of eminence, *The garden of the Lord*. The air was temperate and salubrious; free from chilling damps,

damps, and noxious vapours. The earth brought forth fruits of excellent flavour, and in a rich abundance, with the tilling, but without the painful toil and burdensome fatigue of the cultivator. No thorns or briars infested the ground—no poisonous plant to breed diseases or death.—It was stored with trees, of every necessary and suitable kind.—From the midst of the garden, a pleasant fountain spread its agreeable streams, through four different channels.—And near at hand stood the *tree of life*, the property of which, from its name, is conjectured to have been, that whenever the man eat of it, it gave him fresh vigor, that so he might live for ever. But of all the trees of the garden he might freely eat, one only excepted.—Such was the garden of Eden.—Such the terrestrial paradise.—To make it the more agreeable, it was stocked with birds and beasts, who had no power to hurt, but were in perfect submission. Man was lord of them all. They were entirely at his will. And, as a token of his property in them, whatsoever he called them, that was their name.—And, yet further,

that the man might not be alone, the Lord provided him a companion of the same nature with himself.——Male and female created he them.——The woman was formed out of the man, and given to him.——

“ Grace was in all her steps. Heaven in her eye.

“ In every gesture, dignity and love.”

MILTON.

In short, he was happy—And happiness he would have enjoyed for ever—perhaps for ever in this world—perhaps, after some years of probation, have been removed to a still happier world. This, at least, has been an opinion entertained. You see, from the whole, how indulgent a father the Lord was to our first parents. At this time, they knew no sorrow—no anguish of heart or depression of spirits—no troubles or fearful apprehensions——no terror or uneasiness. They slept, and their sleep refreshed them. They eat and drank, and both agreed with them. Their work was their pleasure. They loved their Creator, and loved one another. They sang hymns to God, and committed themselves to his care. And the Lord (by some visible manifestation

tion of himself) walked in the garden, and conversed with them.—So, though *made a little lower than the Angels*, they were *crowned with glory and honour*.^p—

And when the Lord saw the work, which he had so exquisitely constructed in the resemblance of himself, he blessed it, pronounced it *very good*, and *rested on the seventh day and was refreshed*,^q that is, pleased with the operations of his hands.—Let us now

II. Attempt some observations, for our improvement of this history. And here,

1. I cannot help putting up a sigh, upon the reflection of what man was, compared with what he now is.—The description I have endeavoured at, is that of the *golden age* of the world; of its state before the fall. That fall, alas! has marred the whole. One tree we have hinted, and only one, was forbidden our first parents. Concerning that, it was said, *ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*^r No injunction could be more reasonable; nor, one would have thought,

^p Psalm viii. 5. ^q Exod. xxxi. 17. ^r Gen. iii. 3.

thought, easier kept. And yet that command they broke. — Satan envied their happiness, which reminded him of what he had irrecoverably lost. He knew that the only method to destroy it, would be to lead them to provoke their God. Sin is God's only provocation. The Devil beguiled Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit. He persuaded her, *that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise.** — Grasping at the shadow, the substance slipped from her. — Aspiring after more knowledge than was meet, *she took of the tree and did eat.* — She allured her husband, and he also eat.

“ Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat

“ Sighing, thro’ all her works, gave signs of woe,

“ ‘That all was lost.’ ——— MILTON.

They eat, and their eyes were opened. — They saw they were naked; they felt they had offended, and *hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden.*† — We have all experienced the baneful effects of their transgression. — Adam, as the natural head, was the public representative also of his race.

* Gen. iii. 6.

† Gen. iii. 8.

race. By sin he lost his holiness, and forfeited his happiness. He could not transmit to his posterity that of which he was not himself possessed. Hence, by his guilt and our own, we, his descendants, are become criminal, depraved and wretched——exposed to the resentment of the sovereign of the world—rebels against heaven, and the tame drudges of the prince of darkness—the prey of malignant appetites and passions—*born unto trouble,*^u and unto death—and in danger of everlasting destruction in a future state of existence. Such are the trophies of the victory, sin has gained over the human race.—It has slain its thousands and ten thousands, and shall we tamper with it? It has spread devastation over the world, and shall we hug it as a friend? Think of what man was, and would have been. Think of what we feel—of what we expect—and of the misery reserved for the finally impenitent. How just the inference, that *the wages of sin is death!*^w Should we not, therefore, detest sin, as our greatest enemy? Affecting case, that mankind

^u Job v. 7.

^w Rom. vi. 23.

mankind dislike the distress, but not the cause of that distress! — They groan, and are in an agony, and yet grasp the weapon that has wounded them, unwilling to let it go, and even wounding themselves with it afresh. — Such is the folly of the mind. — Let us drop a tear over the infatuation of human nature, and mourn the ravages of sin: at the same time that, in the

2. Place, We bless God for the ample relief the gospel has provided for fallen man. — *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.* * So ran the promise of a deliverer, made to our first parents. — God, who might have abandoned the human race, has in mercy revealed a wondrous scheme, to counteract the designs of the devil for the ruin of mankind. He has laid help on one mighty to save, and appointed his own son to be made *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, at once to *condemn sin*, † and to save his people from it. — This is a salvation, I most heartily recommend to you, as a sovereign remedy for the evils and disorders we have spoken

* Gen. iii. 15.

† Rom. viii. 3.

spoken of. It never failed, in the event, perfectly to cure, all those who tried it. Jesus hath died, and there is peace made by the blood of his cross—sin is pardoned—God's justice reconciled—and a new and living way opened, whereby the Most High is discovered to be the believing sinner's father and God. This salvation delivers from the tyranny and defilement of lust and corruption.—It raises the spiritually dead—alarms the secure—sanctifies the depraved heart—gives a taste and relish for the things of God, and excites to an hatred and dislike, of that which is impure and unholy. It inclines to prayer—to love God and his word—to believe on the son of God; and yield the soul, to his direction and government. It comforts and supports, through this wearisome world—is a cordial under the sense of sin, and under the hard pressure of worldly trials—makes affliction appear comparatively light, and death the christian's friend. It takes the sanctified soul to heaven—raises the body from the grave—and glorifies both in the image of God, and the likeness of Christ
Jesus

Jesus. All this, and infinitely more, is implied in the christian salvation. Let me ask, which do we chuse, which seriously wish for, which uniformly pursue, the happiness of belonging to Jesus, and being saved by him, or the misery of living and dying in sin? What has been said teaches us, that either we must be holy and happy, or sinful and wretched; and as christianity is the only method revealed, for our recovery from the consequences of the fall, may we not infer the indispensable necessity of seeking this blessing according to the plan there chalked out? And, of course, that all who are indifferent about the great salvation, are in the road to certain destruction?—Happy they, who are brought to a right discernment of this weighty truth, through the power and grace of God's Holy Spirit!—Happy they, *who watch daily at wisdom's gates, and wait at the posts of her doors!*—*He that findeth her, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.*—*But he that sinneth against her, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate her love death.*²

D I S.

² Prov. viii. 34, 35, 36.

DISCOURSE II.

Adam, where art thou ?

GENESIS iii. 9.

And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou ?

FROM a description of the *image of God in man*, attempted in the former discourse, the transition is natural, to an enquiry into the effects of our fall, from that state of felicity. The investigation of this will enhance the value of the remedy revealed; and to such an investigation my text obviously leads us. — It is a question proposed by God himself, who, pitying the situation of our first parents, made himself known to them, in a manner that, perhaps, they were before accustomed to; and accosting them with his usual familiarity, called to them both,

both, as partaking of human nature,
 “*Adam, where art thou?*”

It cannot be reasonably supposed, that God was unacquainted with their crime, or called through want of information. — The enquiry was rather intended to lead them to serious examination, and a reflection on the state into which they had plunged themselves. And it directs us to ask,

I. In what state were they, at this time, to occasion the question, *Where art thou?* And,

II. What may be inferred from the manner in which the question was proposed?

I. In what state were they at this time, to occasion the enquiry, “*Where art thou?*” — The only threatening annexed to the prohibition, of eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, was, *In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die;*^a or, as some have translated the phrase in strict agreement with the original, “*Dying thou shalt die.*”

— An

^a Gen. ii. 17.

—An expression however more striking, more comprehensive, or more significant of the fatal effects of disobedience, could not have been pitched upon.—Take the word death in its common acceptation, and it signifies that change, which makes our very frame to shudder.—Compare its several acceptations in scripture, with what fact points out to us, of the fulfilment of the threatening, and much more will appear than is, at first view, suspected to be contained in it. — As

1. That Adam and Eve became *morally* and *spiritually* dead.—And this happened, not only in pursuance of the threatening, but as the direct and necessary fruit of their sin. *To be carnally minded, is death,*^b an Apostle tells us; and, also, that there is a sense in which such as live in unlawful indulgences, are *dead even while they live.*^c The soul may retain the exercise of its rational faculties, and yet the understanding, the eye of the mind, be so blinded by irregular propensities and passions, as, under their direction, to influence the will, to chuse that which is evil, and refuse that which

^b Rom. viii. 6.

^c 1 Tim. v. 6.

which is good. — Hence our first parents, who before so ardently desired the presence of their God, having fallen from their uprightness, *hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden.*^d

Guilt, no doubt, had its share in exciting them to that step; but this was not all. An ingenuous mind, having committed a fault, is not satisfied without confessing it, and, instead of flying from the injured party, will seek his face, and manifest grief for the offence given. But *he that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.** By attempting to conceal themselves, then, they discovered a reluctance to take shame for their offence, and, of course, that they were unwilling to part with sin, and had lost their original rectitude. — This thought will be farther strengthened, by observing the behaviour of each, when forced to appear. — Could they deny the fact? No. — Could they plead ignorance of their duty? No. — What apology do they bring? They throw the blame off themselves — the man upon the woman, and
upon

^d Gen. iii. 8.^e John iii. 20.

upon God who gave her — the woman upon the serpent. — If they were innocent wherefore did they hide? If they were guilty, why do they fly in the face of their Maker, and refuse the humble acknowledgement of their crime? Did not their frivolous excuses, and particularly the charge exhibited against their Creator, testify that, having parted with their innocence, they were filled with pride and enmity to God? That they had defaced the divine image, which was the spiritual life of their souls? And that, being alienated from the life of God, they had no taste for the company of infinite purity? — “The consciousness of having provoked another’s resentment, often excites the aggressor to keep before-hand with the man he has hurt, and to hate him for the evil he expects in return.” This reasoning seems to have had its full force, in the case of Adam and Eve. — They could not walk with God, for they were at variance with him — There could be no friendly intercourse, between them and the Deity, because

¹ Sterne’s Sermon on forgiveness of injuries.

cause their minds were opposite to him. — And thus disunited from the fountain of holiness, they fell an easy prey to fierce and diabolical tempers, and to Satan the *spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience.*^s Alas! To what a state of depravity were they reduced! — In every respect the reverse of that glory and honour with which they were crowned, when first produced out of the mould of nature, is it not aptly denominated a *death in trespasses and sins*?^h — Again,

2. They lost a great part of that *happiness*, with which God, their maker, had endowed them. — So the sentence is explained in the context. — The woman was adjudged to bear children in sorrow. — The ground was cursed for their sakes; and, the more to annoy them, commanded to bring forth thorns and briars. — The air became agitated by tempests, impregnated with noxious vapours, and exposed to the inclemencies of heat and cold. — The human body was rendered subject to disorder and distress. — Pain, sickness and disaster waited, ready to take the place of health, strength

^s Eph. ii. 2.

^h Eph. ii. 1.

strength and vigour. In sweat and in sorrow man was to eat bread all the days of his life. His work, before his diversion, became now his fatigue ; and yet an evil necessary to be endured, if life were preserved. The nearer Adam and his wife approached to old age, the more liable they were to feebleness, infirmity and decay. The tree of life, which was of such use to refresh and exhilarate, they were denied access unto. And paradise was a place improper for them, any longer, to dwell in—As soon as sin entered, their minds also became unhappy. Reason, before the governess of the soul, was degraded to be the slave, of irregular lusts and appetites. The flesh, formerly in due subjection to reason, usurped the sovereignty, and held the understanding in tyrannical bondage.—In this confusion, could there be happiness?—Besides which, sin, like a malignant poison, distempered the soul with a number of unruly passions.—Pride, impatience, unbelief, malice, envy and covetousness are the tormentors of the mind, and prove it to have, in itself, the seeds of its own misery.—The

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God of justice and love, when he formed a creature, could not but constitute him happy. And sin could not take possession of that creature, without overthrowing his happiness.—The fact we see illustrated, in the degenerate posterity of man. And we cannot suppose it otherwise, in the original transgressors themselves.—Nor must I forget to add, the anxieties they were doomed to, from the distresses or misbehaviour of their family, (as will be dolefully illustrated in the story of Cain and Abel) —from the uncertainty also of earthly acquisitions—and from the misfortunes of life.—Life, how precarious and fleeting its enjoyments! How various its vicissitudes! How numerous and pungent its sorrows! Who can recount them, or the disagreeable feelings resulting from them; —the torture of solicitude and suspense —the restless days and sleepless nights—the spirit depressed by a load of care—the heart ready to burst with pent up woe? —True, there were many intervals of ease and pleasure, which God mercifully intermingled with the hours of affliction. These duty required to be received

ceived with thanksgiving. But still, arguing from our own experience, they were so shadowy, compared with the affliction itself, and so momentary, compared with the tediousness of sorrow, that they might be considered rather as palliatives to the cup of bitterness, than any positive balance of comfort. Grief was still the most familiar acquaintance. As, by sin, man was entitled to none, the super-abounding goodness of God, in affording him a small drop of consolation in this vale of tears, is no argument against the reality, of that deprivation of happiness, which commenced upon his fall from the state in which he was created, nor sets aside the propriety of including it in the term death, by which the scripture denominates it. — And there remains a more affecting part of the sentence to be mentioned,

3. That man was *mortal*. *Dust thou art*, said the Lord, *and unto dust shalt thou return.*ⁱ — The body doomed to linger in toil, pain and disease, was, at last, to grow unfit, for the living principle which inhabited it. The house, composed of brit-

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ⁱ Gen. iii. 19.

tle materials, though a beautiful structure, yet still was dust; and when God withdrew that power, which alone could preserve and invigorate it, became in time an untenable habitation; uncomfortable to the inhabitant while it held up, and quickly falling down, by its own weight, and forcing the tenant out.—Let us then contemplate the dire catastrophe, and mark the triumphs of mortality over the human frame. The speech falters—the eyes fail—a cold sweat bedews the face—*the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern^k*—the breath departs—the whole frame is a stiff, cold, motionless, lifeless corpse.—however lovely, or fondly regarded, it soon putrefies and grows disgusting—it is buried out of sight—it *says to corruption, thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister^l*—it crumbles into dust, and mixes with its native earth.—Thus God drove the man out of paradise, and at length, out of the world—separated him from all his kindred and acquaintance—from all his earthly possessions

^k Eccles. xii. 6.^l Job xvii. 14.

sessions and enjoyments—whatever he called his, ceased to be his any longer—and the place, which once knew him, must know him no more for ever.—Such was the irrevocable decree of heaven—such the baneful effects, of tampering with that abominable thing which God hateth.—Still, however, it is admitted, that his soul was immortal, and destined to live for ever. But this, originally a blessing, was by sin transformed into a curse; for there remains,

4. Another view of this death to which man became liable, I mean, the *second death*, or the condemnation of the soul in hell.—As, on the one hand, our first parents became, by their crime, unfit for the society of heaven, so the deserved punishment, if inflicted, would have been the same with the angels *who kept not their first estate, but left their own original habitation, and whom God hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day*, then to be remanded to *blackness of darkness for ever.*^m—Many people, indeed, think very lightly of sin, and discover their predilection for

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^m Jude vi. 13.

it, by their forwardness to excuse it. Such, therefore, have demanded, "*How the eating a little fruit could deserve the punishment of hell?*" Methinks this objection proceeds, from not properly considering the majesty and holiness of God, and the strictness of his law, which ordains that man accursed, who *continues not in all things that are written therein,*" and that he who offends in one point, treats his lawgiver with contempt, and *is in effect, guilty of all,*^a "as he who breaks one link of a chain breaks the whole chain, and he who fails in one note, spoils the harmony of the whole concert."—"There is great reason therefore, why God should exclude men from an inheritance in his kingdom, though it be but for one single sin, because, without this, the authority of his laws could not be secured; for if God was to dispense with one species of disobedience, by the same reason, the whole round and compass of transgression might be dispensed with."^p Besides which, it may be observed, that the smallness of the thing forbidden, is so far from

^a Gen. iii. 10. ^o James ii. 10. ^p Ibbot's Sermons.

from diminishing the sin of disobedience, that it aggravates it. The smaller the test of obedience, the easier it was to be complied with, and the more inexcusable the daring to touch that which was prohibited.—Add to this also, the motive to the commission of the crime. It proceeded from an ambition of superior knowledge and a higher station, than God had allotted them. “Ye shall be *as Gods*,” said the tempter, *knowing good and evil.*” They aspired after this, though at the expence of their innocence. They preferred the attainment of unlawful wisdom, to their duty to their Maker and God. And if the whole charge is summed up, it will justify the conclusion, of the enormity of the offence, and the equity of the sentence.

Let us recollect the whole.—Is it not well remarked, in the context, that Adam and his wife were *naked*? Did not sin make them so, in every sense of the word—naked, as having lost the image of God—naked, as stripped of almost all the happiness, they were originally endowed with—naked, as mortal and dying creatures—

naked, as exposed defenceless, to the wrath of omnipotence? — We may conceive of the Lord, in the text then, as addressing them in such language as this; “Man, “where art thou? Where are the creatures that I made, that I created upright, “and with whom I lately had communion? Where my children, who used “to meet me with so much pleasure? “What have I done, that they hide themselves from me? Hast thou eat of the “tree, whereof I commanded thee, that “thou shouldest not eat? What else discovered to thee that thou art naked? “Why dost thou not, as usual, look me “in the face? Adam, where art thou? “Poor man, how low art thou fallen! “From what a pitch of glory! To what “a depth of ruin!” — Such thoughts as these, we may justly suppose, the question to contain. Such thoughts the Lord meant to fasten, upon the minds of the delinquents. — And did it not occur to you, while I was speaking, that the foregoing is but too exact a picture of the wretched posterity of Adam, involved as they are in the miseries of the fall? And that
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the question may have, therefore, a more comprehensive meaning? As if the Lord addressed men in general, while in the state of nature, “Sinners! Where are you?—
 “Think for a moment. If one transgressi-
 “on caused so much mischief, what will be
 “the effects of the many you have commit-
 “ed? Ye have sinned against a holy God
 “—a God from whom you cannot flee—
 “and, behold, your iniquity hath overtaken
 “you. Do you experience distress, pain
 “and sickness? Sin is the root of all.
 “Are your minds out of frame, discon-
 “tented, and unhappy? Sin it is, which
 “hath disturbed the tranquility of the
 “soul. Are you in expectation of death?
 “*By one man sin entered into the world,*
 “*and death by sin, and so death passed*
 “*upon all men, for that all have sinned.*⁹
 “Do you tremble at the mention of your
 “dissolution? Sin has armed death, with
 “its most tremendous horrors. Do you
 “fear hell? Sin lighted up its fires,
 “and filled it with its torment. Are
 “you so hardened, as to brave out the
 “*terrors of the Lord?* The more dan-

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⁹ Rom. vi. 12.

“gerous your state. You are hardened
 “by the deceitfulness of sin; and *led cap-*
 “*tive by Satan at his will.* Where are
 “you ~~now~~, sinners? Where do ye think
 “to be, when your change comes? What
 “a dismal prospect have you of eternity,
 “while you remain the enemies of the
 “God of heaven!”—This being the im-
 port of the question in my text, I am
 led

II. To some remarks deducible from
 it.—As

1. It teaches us, that the very first
 motion, towards a reconciliation between
 God and man, is from God himself.—
 When sin had entered, and broke the in-
 tercourse, that originally subsisted between
 earth and heaven, the first overture to its
 restoration, proceeded not from man but
 God. We have no reason to think, Adam
 or his wife would have made the attempt,
 had not God called them from their re-
 treat. And it is a fact, supported by the
 testimony of daily experience and of re-
 peated ages, that, in the conversion of sin-
 ners, God is *found of them that sought*
him

*him not.*¹—The children of Adam do not more resemble their first progenitor, in the features of their faces, and the form of their bodies, than in an unhappy agreement to *cover their transgressions as Adam;*² and, for this purpose, to put God away from them, and hide his knowledge from their thoughts, either by substituting a false idea of God, in place of the true, or drowning themselves in a sea of worldly cares, or worldly pleasures. Our blessed Lord, therefore, came professedly to *seek and save, that which was lost.*³ And, in like manner as God sought out Adam and Eve, so he seeks all who are called, and delivered from sin. He follows them by the admonitions of his word. He follows them by his providence. He hedges up their way, by the restraints of conscience. He lays upon them the fetters of affliction, lest their mad career should issue in ruin. Often does he make serious impressions on their minds, thereby, as it were, whispering to them, “*Why will ye die?*” And in his own time, and by his own means, he calls them by grace, and unites

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¹ Isaiah lxxv. 1. ² Job xxi. 33. ³ Luke xix. 10.

their affections to himself. — Unless God speak thus powerfully, ministers labour in vain. The most solemn truths, the most awakening descriptions, the most cogent arguments, the most awful warnings, the most fervent entreaties prove the mere eloquence of the tongue, they raise an unaffecting admiration, or excite a momentary terror, but fail of their genuine, their salutary effect. But whenever God has accompanied the word, with the mighty energy of his Spirit, it never failed to reach the inward parts, and arrest the sinner in the most secret of his lurking places. *Adam, where art thou?* said the Lord; and Adam immediately came forth. *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* said Jesus; and Saul immediately replied, *Who art thou, Lord?* And, *What wilt thou have me to do?*^a — Observe also,

2. The manner of God's dealings with Adam and Eve, when he called to them. — He came in the *cool of the evening*;^v not in the fierceness of his wrath, to condemn them; but with tenderness in his heart, and mercy in his hands, to usher in

^a Acts ix. 4, 5, 6.

^v Gen. iii. 8.

in the news of the *great Deliverer*. Nevertheless, he began with setting before them the evil of their conduct, and the justice of the penalty incurred ; and when the charge was proved against them, and the futility of their excuses laid open—when they were brought in guilty, and trembled, we may imagine, in apprehension of the fatal stroke, then the Lord stepped in, with a reprieve from immediate destruction, and the promise of a Saviour, who should *bruise the serpent's head*—destroy the works of the devil—rescue them from his tyranny—reinflate them in the image of the Most High—and exalt them, above the miseries of this world, to the glories of the celestial paradise.—This was the tenor of the first gospel sermon, the preacher God himself —In the faith of this promise (frequently repeated and further explained) Adam, and the Old Testament saints, lived and died. And may we not discern, in this part of the divine proceedings, an exact picture of the method, whereby, in every age, sinners are made acquainted with religion ? God's word says, *Repent and be converted, that your sins may*
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be blotted out.^{*} These are never to be separated. Where there is not an humbling conviction of sin, there is no value for Christ and his salvation. When, therefore, God's Spirit calls, in that effectual manner we have been speaking of, a tribunal is erected in the man's conscience, a solemn process is entered on, and the sinner, arraigned and stripped of every false hope, is reduced to an humble supplication for mercy, and gladly to embrace the message, of free and unmerited salvation, revealed in the gospel. There is something even in God's works of mercy, that tends to inspire an awakened mind, with reverence and godly fear. The procedure of conversion dictates it; nor do the most animating comforts contradict this seriousness of temper. They teach the heart to exult in God, and yet, at the same time, to *rejoice with trembling*,[†] impressed with an holy awe of the divine Majesty, and a bitter recollection of its own transgressions, by which God has been offended.—Permit me to add, that such a penitent retrospect on their past errors,

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^{*} Acts iii. 19.[†] Psalm cxviii.

is a blessing which duty and interest call upon men, devoutly to pray for; because remorse is one of the necessary and unavoidable effects of sin; and either conversion will teach it spiritually, or judgment compel to it legally. That powerful voice, which forced Adam from his retreat, will ere long utter, in tremendous accents, "Arise ye dead and come to judgment." The most reluctant sinner will be unable to resist this summons, or dispute the justice of his proceedings, who *shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil.*²—As then, ye wish to hear that voice with pleasure, and look up with comfort in that day, listen to the voice of conscience—listen to the voice of God, speaking to you in his word—and be unceasingly importunate, that his Spirit may enlighten your understanding, set your sins in order before you, possess you of *that repentance which is not to be repented of,*³ and direct you to the great propitiation, through which sin is forgiven, and spiritual blessings are conveyed to the soul. So will you be prepared to meet

² Eccles. xii. 14.³ 2 Cor. vii. 10.

meet God—so will your iniquities be no more remembered against you—so will you obtain *refreshment from the presence of the Lord*^b—so will you lift up your heads with joy, when the groans of expiring nature, and the heart-rending cries of the condemned proclaim, that the great day of wrath is come—and *so will you be ever with the Lord.*^c

^b Acts iii. 19.

^c 1 Thess. iv. 17.



DISCOURSE III.

CAIN and ABEL.

GENESIS iv. 6, 7.

And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth ; and why is thy countenance fallen ? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted ? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.

IT has been asserted, that *Christianity* is as old as the creation ; containing an implication, that if a revelation were made from heaven, it could not consist of more, than certain directions to duty, which were already clear enough, from the natural dictates of the human understanding ; and, consequently, that the Bible, as an extraordinary message from heaven, was superfluous. — It is not my province here, to maintain the opposite
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side of the question. That has been successfully done by abler pens. Nor does the remark pretend to originality, that it may be freely admitted, christianity is *very near* as old as the creation.—Such was the kindness of the Lord, that as soon as necessary, he made it known; and, in this chapter, we have an early picture, of the workings of evangelical religion, in the heart of a godly man, and of the opposition it has met with in the world.

The eldest son, and first-born, of Adam was fondly believed by his mother, to be the fulfilment of the promise, that her seed should destroy the serpent. In the exultation of her mind, therefore, she lost remembrance of the pain with which she bore him, and called his name Cain (a word that signifies *acquisition*) for she said, *I have gotten a man from the Lord*; or, as many respectable authorities have interpreted the words, *I have gotten a man, the Jehovah*; thereby denoting the exalted idea she entertained, of the divine dignity and glory of him, who was to undertake the recovery of sinners. But she was too sanguine in her expectations. With enthusiasm,

thusiasm added to maternal affection, she nourished a viper, that planted a sting in her heart. She stands forth to warn us, that when unguarded hopes are raised to the highest pitch, their vigorous sallies may, perhaps, be only opening a passage for sorrow and vexation.—Cain, the first man born into the world, was one of the most abandoned wretches that ever resided in it.

Abel, the second son of Adam, acquired this name, either from the disappointment our first parents sustained in their first-born; or from the bitter effects they already experienced, of the curse they had incurred; or, not improbably, from the manner of his own death; for the word signifies *vanity* and *mourning*; and his end was attended with those calamitous circumstances, that have made it a subject of lamentation, to minds capable of feeling and sympathy, ever since.

In the days of primæval simplicity, agriculture and pasturage offered themselves, as employments the most obviously adapted, to the supply of the necessary demands of nature; mankind being, at that early period, unpractised in
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those schemes of interest and self-gratification, further intercourse and experience taught them.—The cultivation of the earth was chosen, by the active spirit and robust constitution of Cain; whilst the softness of Abel's disposition preferred the custody of the sheepfold, an occupation equally innocent and contemplative.—Indeed, the tempers of the brothers were, on all accounts, so different, so opposite, that if Abel was meek and lovely, Cain was boisterous and impetuous. If Abel was honest and unsuspicious, Cain was jealous and designing. If Abel was tender and compassionate, Cain was hard and unrelenting. If Abel was righteous, Cain regarded iniquity in his heart.—And an opportunity occurred too soon, of disclosing the malignity within him.—On a certain occasion, probably at the end of harvest, which concluded the year, each brought his offering unto the Lord.—Adam, we may suppose, the high-priest of his family, to offer these gifts.—Cain brought of the fruit of the ground.—But Abel of the first-born of his flock, and of those the fattest.—*And the Lord had*

had respect unto Abel, and to his offering, (a manner of expression which intimates, that the acceptance of the person of a gracious man, is prior to that of his duties, and therefore not by the virtue of those duties) *but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect.*—Whether this regard for Abel's offering, was made known by any visible token, or by the calmness and serenity of Abel's mind, expressed in the cheerfulness of his countenance, or by both, Cain discovered it, his natural jealousy took fire, lest his younger brother should be a greater favourite of heaven than himself (as if, by right of primogeniture, he were entitled to a pre eminence in the divine mercy) and, the reverse of that faithfulness to the soul, which leads to the importunate enquiry, "*Why hidest thou thy face from me?*" his heart swelled with rage, and his countenance was beclouded with sullen resentment — Upon which our text relates, that the Lord spoke to him, by a method familiar and peculiar to those ages wherein the canon of inspiration was incomplete, *Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance*

tenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.—Abel, it would seem, was in fight, when this conversation was held.—Therefore the Lord added, “Behold thy brother.—*Unto thee* “*is his desire.*—He loves thee, and wishes “thy best interest.—He honours thee as “his elder brother, to whom he looks “for patronage, and by whom he submits to be directed, as far as it is proper, for one brother to direct another. “—In that sense *thou shalt rule over him.* “—But spiritual favours are those peculiar blessings, which the sovereign of “the world dispenses by a different rule, “and deals out, as it seemeth good in “his sight.”—*Rebuke not a scorner lest he hate thee,*^d was the advice of Solomon.—The proud spirit of Cain, was hurt by a rebuke from infinite purity.—Confirmed in his suspicion, that Abel was more honoured than himself, and averse to lay the blame on his own conduct, his anger settled into an inveterate hatred of his brother, and an inhuman resolution to butcher

^d Prov. ix 8.

butcher him, which step, it is possible also, he thought himself authorized to take, by a misinterpretation of the *rule* permitted him over his brother, and a self important opinion, that it gave him, the disposal of life and property — In Cain, accordingly, you have the first example of a persecutor and murderer of good people. The blood of an innocent victim thus determined on, it was easy to pick a quarrel, and conjure up a pretence for revenge. — Cain decoyed Abel, under pretence of talking with him in the field. — The Jewish historians, if to be credited, relate the conversation; and inform us, “ That Cain denied there was any
“ cognizance of men’s actions—any future judgment, any thing in religion but
“ form and priest-craft, or any connection
“ between the life of a man in this world,
“ and his happiness or misery in the next.”
— The subsequent part of his conduct gives reason to apprehend, that he entertained such pernicious notions. — Abel, venturing to vindicate the justice of God, stimulated the premeditated enmity of Cain’s heart, to a degree of fierceness not to be
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foothed — Not the arguments, the tears, the entreaties of the innocent sufferer — not a recollection of the sorrow, with which he was about to pierce his parents hearts — not a thought of the presence of Almighty God, could stop his wicked purpose. — *He rose up furiously against Abel his brother*; and, with a stone, or with one of his implements of husbandry, *slew him*; nor did the expiring pangs, or dying groans, of the object of his barbarity, plead with him for a reprieve of the last, the fatal stroke. — What a frightful form did death assume, in this first of his triumphs over the human race! — A murderer's hand reeking from the blood of his own brother! — Piety trampled under the feet of pride and cruelty! — And the stern fratricide, unmoved at the spectacle before him, proceeding, with the deliberation of a trader in mortality, to bury out of sight, the body he had just deprived of life; and, with the firmness of a practised villain, prepared to deny, the share he had in its dissolution! — Mean time the distressed parents (afflicted at the misunderstanding in their family, but pleased

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to behold their sons withdraw for conversation, confiding also in Abel's piety and temper, and willing to hope, that his *soft answers might turn away* his brother's *wrath*^c) we are left to represent to ourselves, big with expectation of the return of their children in friendship—eagerly and repeatedly looking out for them—alarmed at their long stay—going out to seek them; but neither is to be found.—They proceed to Cain's habitation, but find it forsaken.—They look this and that way, but in vain.—Imagination paints every tree, every distant shrub, in the shape of a man, but a second view undeceives them.—They call Abel, but his ears are, for the first time, deaf to the parental summons; his tongue, accustomed to diffuse comfort into their hearts, no longer can perform that dutiful, that delightful office.—Fatigued with the fruitless pursuit, they return home and watch the night, in apprehension of some unknown mischief, yet inclined to admit a ray of hope.—With the dawn the search is renewed—perhaps continued

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^c Prov. xv. 1.

many tedious hours, till (as generally happens) by some traces, which the murderer had not the art to conceal, they are led to a discovery of the breach made, in the small number of which the world consisted—that one son is a corpse, the other with his wife a fugitive, and themselves are left disconsolate and alone.

Banished, indeed was Cain, in the most awful sense.—*The Lord said unto him, "Where is Abel thy brother?" "I know not,"* replied he insolently. *"Am I my brother's keeper, and accountable for his actions, or what may befall him?"—*"Knowest thou not?" returned the omniscient accuser.—*What hast thou done?*—"Knowest thou not, that the voice of thy brother's blood crieth for vengeance, from the earth wherein thou hast hid his body?—Thou saidst, there is not a God that judgeth; but thine experience shall verify the sad truth.—The earth was more kind to thy brother, than thyself born of the same parents.—It received into its bosom that body thou hast mangled, that blood thou hast spilt; and will testify its indignation,

“ tion, at the horrid deed thou hast perpetrated.—*When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth, yield to thee its usual strength, its fruitful increase, but only a bare subsistence.*——Nor shalt thou eat thy scanty portion in peace, but with trembling and anxiety.—Thou shalt flee when none pursueth.—Thou shalt have thine enemy within thee, of which thou canst not divest thyself.”

——Pride and despair are nearly allied, the former the parent of the latter. No state in this world, but mercy may reach unto, if there appears an heart to seek it. The contrite in spirit, while he justifies God in the vengeance due to his iniquities, will unceasingly deprecate that vengeance, and importunately supplicate pardon.——There was not any thing, in the sentence passed upon Cain, that excluded him from hope, or implied his final and irreverfible doom in the next world; but he carelefsly took this for granted,—*from thy face shall I be hid*, he fays; and his proud fpirit could not brook the penitent's prayer. Compare his conduct, under the confcioufnefs of blood-

guiltiness, with that of David, convicted of the same fact.—David, an accessory to the death of Uriah, did not deny the enormity of his crime, but *acknowledged his transgression, and his sin was vere before him.*^f—Cain, the actual murderer of Abel, instead of confessing it with grief, reproaches his judge with inflicting too severe a punishment.—David's earnest petition was for mercy to his soul.—Cain's only concern, lest any of the posterity of Adam should revenge the death of their kinsman, by slaying his murderer—*And it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.*—David, assured he should not die, was not to be pacified, without tasting in his mind the forgiving love of God.—Cain, no sooner had the promise (by some token or mark we are ignorant of) that he should not be slain, but he *went out from the presence of the Lord*—turned his back upon the Most High—and renounced the true religion.—His distrust of God's veracity, and the agitations of his own mind, induced him to build a city, to fortify

^f Psalm li. 3.

tify himself against the posterity of Adam; but this was all the effect his fears had upon him.—We never read of his sorrow for his crime, or desire that God might be reconciled to him. On the contrary, he is supposed to have been the first contriver of that false worship, which substituted the creature in the place of the Creator.—His offspring were renowned for arts—they invented instrumental-music—they encreased their flocks and herds—they digged riches out of the bowels of the earth; but were ignorant of the one thing needful.—While the other sons of Adam were named the *sons of God*, these, in token of their depravity, were marked as the sons and *daughters of men*; the more dangerous as the more accomplished.—By their insinuating address and contagious examples, vice (before confined, in some measure, by the restraints of religion) broke through all bounds, and overspread the world, the emblem of that destructive deluge, of which it was the cause and fore-runner.

The history of Cain and Abel thus
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Gen. vi. 2.

recited, holds out to our consideration three truths, that deserve to be duly weighed.

I. The origin of the spirit of persecution.

II. The nature and advantage of the acceptable worship of God. And,

III. The danger of formality and hypocrisy in religion.

I. The origin of the spirit of persecution. *Cain slew his brother Abel*, saith the Apostle John. *And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*^b — A consciousness of his own insincerity, and envy of his brother's superior success, drove him to that desperate method of wreaking his resentment.—The spirit of persecution, however plausibly disguised, has always gone in the footsteps of Cain.—The exercise of true religion is utterly incompatible with so detestable a temper.—True religion is an emanation from the God of love, and like the august Being from whom it descends, is love.—God is infinite and immutable

^b 1 John iii. 12.

mutable felicity; and, perfectly happy in himself, is not racked by any wayward passions, nor confines his felicity to his own nature; but *is good unto all, his tender mercies are over all his works.*¹—The streams of his bounty are diffused, thro' every part of the creation, and extend to the *unjust, the evil, and unthankful.*^k—Religion, created in the image of God, is also meek, gentle and peaceable, long-suffering and tender-hearted.—Whatever she sees amiable, she approves.—She *thinketh no evil*, is not apt to put the worst construction, but *hopeth all things.*¹—In cases doubtful, she either chuses not to judge, or leans to the favourable side, disposed to make all proper allowances, for the prejudices of education, or disadvantages for knowledge, people may have had the misfortune to fall into.—In those comparatively few cases, wherein from the dictates of truth, she is constrained to judge unfavourably, still she chuses to pity—to pray for—to bear.—A genuine, well-informed regard to truth does not, by any means, influence to ut-

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¹ Psalm cxlv. 9. ^k Luke vi. 35. ¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 5, 7.

ter threats and invectives, throw about fire-brands, arrows and death, or withhold freedom of thought and enquiry.—No.—The best of causes is hurt by such an unhallowed defence.—Attend to the language of divine wisdom. “*Search the scriptures, for in them is eternal life, and they are they that testify of me.*”^m—Prove “*all things; and hold fast that which is good.*”ⁿ—Consider these things, and the Lord “*give you understanding in all things.*”^o—Such meekness and lowliness adorned the life of Christ, *God manifest in the flesh.*^p But the spirit of persecution, in any and every form, is a narrow, contracted temper, that would bend all minds to its own standard. It carries the undeniable evidence of imposture in its restlessness—unhappy itself, and, therefore, disturbed at the happiness of others.—That complacency and delight, which good people experience in the Lord their God, serve as oil to inflame the malignity of the wicked against them. The same invidious principle, that hurried on Cain to the destruction

^m John v. 39.

ⁿ 1 Thess. v. 21.

^o 2 Tim. ii. 7.

^p 1 Tim. iii. 16.

tion of his pious brother, from the mouth of Paul, before his conversion, *breathed out threatenings and slaughter*^a against the disciples of the holy Jesus—dictated the persecutions of paganism, of popery, and of protestantism—and spirits up the insidious murderer of reputation, to traduce the piety, and undervalue the religion of his neighbour—to watch for his halting, injure his character, and aggravate his failings—or to misrepresent his sentiments, because they happen not to quadrate exactly with his own.—Good God! Does the gospel of Christ Jesus infuse such bitterness into the hearts of men?—No.—Christianity turns from it with disdain, equally abhorring its grimace of superior sanctity, its unholy zeal for the benevolent doctrines of free-grace, and its high-sounding claim to charity and candour. Divest it of the false glare, with which it is frequently surrounded, and you may read on it, the rebuke of him *who went about doing good*.^b

“*Ye know not what manner of spirit ye*
 “*are of. The son of man came not to de-*
 “*stroy men’s lives, or abridge their hap-*

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“ piness,

^a Acts ix. 1.^b Acts x 38.

“piness, *but to save them,*” and promote “their welfare.” If then we call ourselves the disciples of Christ, *let the same mind be in us, which was in Christ Jesus.*”

II. The offering of Abel teaches us, the nature and advantages of the acceptable worship of God.—*By faith Abel offered unto God, a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh,*” to instruct us, that religion has not varied with the vicissitudes of time, the fashions of the world, or the difference of dispensations under which it was published, but has ever been substantially the same, in the hearts of the godly. This remark will be justified, by tracing in the character of Abel, that worship to which God has respect, and the experience of his people corresponds.—Faith, in its most extensive signification, comprehends the whole or that persuasion of the reality and glory of spiritual objects, which the Apostle describes, as the *substance of things hoped for, and the evidence* of

” Luke ix. 55. ” Phil. ii. 5. ” Heb. xi. 4.

of things not seen,^w together with those acts of the soul, that flow from such a powerful conviction.—The eminence of Abel's faith is conspicuous, in the *nature* and *excellence* of his offering. The former discovers the intimations he had received, and imprinted by divine grace on his heart, of the gospel method of acceptance and salvation, through *the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*^x—He brought, therefore, *of his flock*, a sacrifice unto the Lord, in humble confession of his own guilt and demerit, at the same time directing his views beyond the sacrifice, to that promised atonement it typified, which was to take away sin and purify the conscience.—Nor is it less worthy of observation, that he brought *of the firstlings of his flock, and the fatness thereof*, (the very best, the most excellent) an act expressive of his profound reverence for the divine Being, whom he would not affront with an offering of small value, when he had better in his possession; and expressive also, of the high sentiments he had imbibed, of the glory

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of

^w Heb. xi. 1.^x Rev. xiii. 8.

of that superior sacrifice, his offering shadowed out.—And God testified his acceptance of his gifts, and that he was righteous.—This testimony is left for our perusal, that he *saw* the promises—that he was *persuaded of them*—that he *embraced them*,^y a clear and scriptural definition of faith, that, if duly considered, might have prevented many unnecessary and unavailing disputes on the subject.—Wherever the same faith dwells, as it is of God's implantation, he still witnesseth that *such worshippers* are justified in his sight, and those whom *the Father seeketh to worship him*.^z—He witnesseth it in the word of his grace.—He witnesseth it to their souls, by the consolations of his spirit.—He witnesseth it by the effect of divine communications, in spiritualizing the mind, encouraging it under difficulties, and animating it to duty.—He witnesseth it by that refined pleasure his people feel, in extending his glory in this world, and the delightful foretastes of *that eternal weight of glory*,^a which they expect in that which is to come. The contrast to this

^y Heb. xi. 13. ^z John iv. 23. ^a 2 Cor. iv. 17.

this state, is illustrated in the example of Cain, which teaches us,

III. The danger of those pretensions to religion, that reach no farther than the outward appearance.—From a sense of decency, or dread of his parents, Cain did not refuse his offering; but it has been remarked, that the nature of his oblation, and the circumstances attending it, were an explicit proof, of his disregard for the great object of worship.—He brought *of the fruit of the ground*, and of that the least valuable, or what he could best spare.—Certainly, an higher encomium is passed even upon the external part of Abel's sacrifice; (affording us an hint, that, if our souls are under proper influence, we shall not bring to God, *that which costs us nothing*^b—the sleepy refuse of the day—a few hasty, incoherent moments for prayer, stingily subtracted from hours devoted to mammon, or wasted in dissipation.)—But had the offering of Cain been of the most costly and expensive kind, with Cain's temper it must have

^b 2 Sam. xxiv. 24.

have met with a repulse, from him *who searcheth the heart*, and, by the standard of unerring purity, *trieth the reins*^c of the children of men.—And in Cain we may read, the easy transition from mere formality, to vice of the most atrocious nature.—“*If thou doest not well*, said the “*heavenly vision, sin lieth at the door,* “*to lead thee farther astray—at the door,* “*with a long train of punishments, its* “*natural and necessary effects.*”—So slippery the path of sin, so steep is its descent, that, by a rapid progress, the wicked man *waxeth worse and worse*,^d till the mantle of hypocrisy becomes too short a covering, to conceal his deviations from the paths of rectitude.—*Will the hypocrite always call upon God?*^e—No.—Inwardly disrelishing the spirituality of divine worship, his inclinations lean the contrary way, and his most dazzling appearances are no other than the effects of education, the productions of fancy, the off-offspring of pride; and, in fact, the covert of a mind hardened against the fear of the Lord, an attempt to unite earth and heaven, or, rather, to impose upon his own conscience,

^c Jer. xvii. 10. ^d 2 Tim. iii. 3. ^e Job xxvii. 10.

conscience, with something of the semblance of religion, while destitute of the reality.—And where piety is only assumed, the most exact notions are but empty speculation—whims, raptures and warmth of animal passions quickly evaporate and die away—there is but little difficulty in reconciling a splendid profession with secret self-indulgence, or, when opportunity serves, in laying the fictitious character aside.—Our blessed Saviour represents a man unprincipled by divine grace, as having his soul *swept and garnished*^f with pride, self-confidence and carelessness, in a manner to invite temptation. And what better can be expected, than that the first bold and suitable attack will drive away the mask of religion, and proclaim him an abandoned sinner, perhaps a scoffer at all that is serious, and more determined in the pursuit of wickedness, than those who never made the opposite pretensions?—A melancholy symptom of a wretch lost to reflection, and delivered over to his own obduracy!—A dreadful preparation, unless sovereign mercy prevent, for that

^f Mat. xii. 44.

that never-ending-torment which awaits the ungodly, and will bear a dismal proportion to the knowledge that has been perverted, and the reproofs resisted; aggravated by the guilt of dissimulation in the most awful matters, and of apostacy from the allegiance due to Jesus, who is *God over all blessed for ever*.^g — *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*^h — Nothing less than the power of the grace of God, renewing the heart, will stand against the contrary efforts of corrupt nature; — nothing less abide the assaults of temptation and trial; — nothing less than true *faith overcome the world*; ⁱ — nothing less will avail in that solemn day, when Christ *will make up his jewels*,^k and, with infallible skill, separate the genuine brilliant from the glittering pebble, which shuns examination. — *Search us, O Lord, and know our hearts; try us, and know our thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting.*^l Amen. Amen.

^g Rom. ix. 5. ^h Mat. xiii. 9. ⁱ 1 John v. 4.

^k Mal. iii. 17. ^l Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

DISCOURSE IV.

NOAH'S ARK.

GENESIS vii. 16.

— And the Lord shut him in.

B*Y faith, says Paul, Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house: by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.^m Of Noah our text speaks; and the above representation authorizes two views of the operation of his faith.*

I. That, obedient to the divine injunction, he literally constructed a vessel for the preservation of himself and family, by which he condemned the infidelity of his antediluvian cotemporaries.

II. That

^m Heb. xi. 7.

II. That he considered the means of his temporal safety, as prefigurative of that salvation which the gospel more amply explains; in the faith of which he became a partaker, of the exclusive privileges of the children of God. — The former, will lead me to relate the story of the general deluge, and the method whereby Noah survived the calamity — the latter, to accommodate the particulars to subjects of spiritual and eternal moment.

I. Then, Was the deluge universal? And whence could there issue water sufficient, for the purpose of overwhelming the world? are questions that have been started, and demand some attention. — To the first it is answered, That though the words, *under the whole heaven*, whereby Moses describes the extent of the flood, are not always in the language of scripture to be taken in an unlimited sense, yet the assurance of the Bible, that *all flesh upon the earth died*, the appearance of sea-shells on the tops of mountains, the skeletons of whales and crocodiles in the bowels

bowels of the earth, and at a vast distance from the sea, the bones of animals, together with the fossils and vegetables peculiar to one part of the globe, found buried in other remote countries, with other spectacles of like nature, incontrovertibly prove, that the whole world was affected by the deluge. Not to omit another remark, that if it was confined to a particular region, there was no absolute necessity of such a vehicle as Noah was ordered to provide, for preventing the extirpation of men and beasts. His departure to another climate would have been the most eligible and obvious expedient, and many of the birds and beasts might have saved themselves by flight; for it is not easy to conceive, upon this system, how they would be all so exposed, that it was necessary to secure some in the ark, that the various species of animals might not be irrecoverably lost.

“ But whence could there come water sufficient to drown the world ? ”

It is replied, That if, at the creation, the earth was overwhelmed in the waters, before *God said, Let the waters under heaven*

ven be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear," then there is no difficulty in demonstrating the sufficiency of water, in the atmosphere and the bowels of the earth, to overflow the whole world.—I pass by the ingenious conjectures which have been thrown out, concerning the immediate cause of this inundation—conjectures, indeed, which have left the matter as they found it. Who will deny, that God, who hath *laid up the depths in store-houses,*^o could command them out of their repositories, to subserve his own designs? And if, in the whole transaction, the miraculous interposition of providence is to be confessed, why need we have recourse to natural causes, to account for that, which, we are unanimously of opinion, was out of the common course of nature?

The history of this awful event then, as recorded in the sacred oracles, acquaints us, that sin is of so infectious a quality, that, having got footing in the world, it kept pace with the increase of mankind, and was more particularly confirmed

• Gen. i. 9.

• Psalm xxxiii. 7.

firmed in the degen-erate offspring of Cain. — When Seth was given to Adam and Eve, to supply the loss of Abel whom Cain slew, so congenial was the piety of the son to that of the parents, that, upon the birth of a son of like dispositions to Seth, whom he named Enos, *men began to call upon the name of the Lord,*^p that is, to consider themselves as a growing society, set apart by instruction and by grace, in some measure to counterbalance the iniquities existing in the world. —

These, therefore, were stiled, by divine appointment, *the sons of God*, in token of a supernatural change, which was presumed to have passed upon their minds, while the race of Cain lived a sensual, profligate life, and were called the *children of men*.^q — Happy, had the professors of the true religion kept at that distance from its enemies, which Cain preferred when he forsook his father's habitation. But the actual partakers of religion were always the few, even amongst those who have wished to be thought its admirers. And a small temptation may mislead

^p Gen. iv. 26.

^q Gen. vi. 2.

lead an heart unestablished by the grace of God. Here the allurements were powerful. The daughters of Cain were fair as Eve their grandmother. They possessed, moreover, accomplishments calculated, by their misapplication, to catch the incautious eye, and fascinate the unwary heart. Their very company was enchantment — they dressed — they danced — they sung — they touched the tuneful string — they imitated the warbling grove — they studied the art of pleasing, and abused it to the purposes of seduction from God and holiness. — So the daughters of Moab^{*} inveigled Israel to commit wickedness. — And no wonder that, in the present case, the barriers of religious education were too feeble to restrain the seemingly pious, from connecting themselves with the daughters of men, when even the solemnity of marriage-rites was made use of, the better to hide the snare.

As the natural effects of these unequal connections, religion was deserted, the godly perceived to be but a very few, and sin made hasty strides over the world. — The
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^{*} Num. xxv. 1.

descendants of that generation were still more remarkable; many of them for the monstrous size of their persons, and the ambition of their hearts—a gigantic, lawless tribe—terribly great—the plunderers of mankind—renowned for cruelty and oppression—feared, not loved.—The rest, less hardy and enterprizing, were skilled in the arts of life, but yet bid a bold defiance to heaven and all its righteous laws; and, by their evil communications, farther corrupting the race of Seth, at length only one here, and another there, feared God, or thought of his name.—To this high pitch of depravity, men were encouraged to proceed also, by the astonishing longevity of their lives.—— Their years being lengthened out to six, to seven, to eight or nine hundred revolutions, they thought not of death. An event which, in the usual course of things, happened but seldom, seemed to be at such a distance, that in prospect it dwindled into a mere point.

In vain did Enoch preach of the awful judgment, and *Christ who cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon*

upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.* In vain did he leave them a solemn warning in the name of his son Methuselah, intimating that, upon the death of this son, there should be an overflowing (a prediction fulfilled, by the deluge, the year Methuselah died.) All the success he obtained, was his own life for a prey. The Lord saw his pious struggles against the inundation of vice; and, as the most honourable testimony of his affectionate regard, translated him to heaven, without undergoing the pangs of death. *He was not, for God took him.*† — In vain did Noah succeed him as a preacher of righteousness,‡ and remonstrate against their shameful practices. In vain was he commissioned to assure them, positively, of the resentment with which God beheld their crimes; and that (while nothing can, in strict propriety of speech, grieve the immutable God, or cause him to repent)

* Jude xiv. 15. † Gen. v. 24. ‡ 2 Peter ii. 5.

pent) the effects to them would be the same, as if it *repented him that he had made man, and grieved him at his heart.* One hundred and twenty years were even fixed upon, as the term beyond which, without repentance, man should not have his existence upon earth; but the pious monitor gained no credit; his instructions were ridiculed—his reproofs despised—his benevolent counsels rejected—and in the event of a trial of the world, for about one thousand and six hundred years, it was remarked, by the omniscient witness of men's actions, *that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, only evil continually; for all flesh had corrupted his way, the earth was filled with violence,** and religion confined within the small circle of Noah's family.

But the faithful minister, *found favour in the sight of the Lord*, and, with his family, was spared, while God wiped from the earth the stain and burden of sin, by the destruction of its inhabitants. Com-
manded to build an ark, or chest, for
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* Gen. vi. 5, 6, 11.

the preservation of himself, his family, and such of the brute creatures as were appointed unto life, he will be found, upon examination, to have been divinely directed to that sort of materials (of *gopher* or *cypress* wood) and that particular shape, which rendered it, at once, a commodious receptacle for the creatures deposited in it, and the best adapted for swimming upon the surface of the waters.* What a *trial of cruel mockings*,† methinks, did the good man endure, in this period of the history!—Every stroke of his hammer, was a rebuke of the world's insensibility; but some pointed at him for an enthusiast, others a madman. He could not complete a vessel of that magnitude, without considerable assistance; and they whom he employed, laughed at him for the

* About the beginning of the last century Peter Janſon (a Dutch Baptiſt) built a ſhip upon the ſame conſtruction as Noah's ark, which, at firſt, was greatly ridiculed; but found, upon trial, to be the beſt adapted for commerce of any veſſel of its ſize; becauſe it contained more by one third, without requiring more hands, and moreover ſailed ſwifter.—*Bibliotheca Biblica*.

† Heb. xi. 36.

the project. " Our duty, said they, is
 " to obey, to follow the directions of
 " our employer, and earn our wages;
 " and if, when his chest is made, he
 " brings the water to it, we will extol
 " him, as the prophet he arrogates the
 " honour of.^a He talks to us of a de-
 " luge drawing near; but *where is the*
 " *promise of its coming fulfilled? For*
 " *since the fathers fell asleep, things go on*
 " *in their usual rotation, and all things*
 " *continue as they were from the creation.*"^a

—But he that shall come, will come and
 will not tarry.^b The Lord waited, with
 much long-suffering till the ark was ready,
 and then proceeded to action. And now
 a wonderful phænomenon ensued. A se-
 lect number of the irrational animals, by
 a special and peculiar instinct, approach-
 ed the ark, and sought admittance. The
 beasts of the forest sustained a temporary
 suspension of their natural fierceness; the
 lordly and majestic lion, the untamed
 panther, and savage leopard in friendly
 concert with the harmless sheep, of their

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¶ Calmet's Dictionary on the word NOAH.

^a 2 Pet. iii. 4.

^b Heb. x. 37.

own accord reclining, in the cells allotted to them. And Noah, with his large family, being housed, our text adds, *the Lord shut him in*, so closely that no force could wrest open, or water penetrate through the door. Which done, let us pause a moment, and contemplate the state of affairs, within and without the ark, on the last day of the old world.—Within, behold Noah filled with awe, in solemn prayer to God, and watching the first tokens of his wrath.—Without, if there were any pretensions at all to religion, we may imagine, that the blind-led idolator falls down before the sun, adores him as the author of his being, and execrates the man, who believes in any other ruler of the world;—the priests are inventing new superstitions to impose upon the public, and new gratifications for themselves in private;—and the sneering infidel, aware of the cheat, laughs at all religion, as an hypocritical scheme to fatten the priest hood, or a political engine to overawe the vulgar.—But religion of any kind scarcely engages the notice of multitudes. *The men of renown* are engrossing

grossing the land to themselves and their heirs for ever; or they are carrying into execution some new schemes of oppression, which the oppressed repay with curses, and, in their turn, pillage one another. The pale-faced worldling, meagre in his visage and apparel, is secreting from the eyes of the injured or rapacious, the produce of fraud and dishonesty; and he contemplates the wages of unrighteousness, with a mixture of joy and anxiety. The man of business resolves *to go to-morrow into such or such a city, and buy and sell and get gain.*^c His opulent neighbour, on the other hand has retired, secured his wealth, and sung the requiem to his soul, *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat drink and be merry.*^d The sons and daughters of pleasure have devoted the day to mirth and festivity. *They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away,*^e said our Lord Jesus Christ; by which he did not mean, to criminate

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^a James iv. 13. ^d Luke xii. 19. ^e Mat. xxiv. 37.

the appointed use of the indulgences of life; the latter clause of the verse points out the latitude, in which the former is to be understood. They disregarded God their maker. They had offered themselves a sacrifice at the shrine of folly. They were overwhelmed in sensuality and vice, and their hearts and eyes too intent upon self-gratification, to perceive the symptoms of the impending judgment. We may suppose, then, the table of luxury to be spread—the choicest fruits provided—the most delicious wines prepared—the feast greedily devoured—the cup of drunkenness closely plied—the pophane oath and wanton jest briskly circulated—the lewd song received with applause, and re-echoed by the strains of music, till, heated by intemperance, the guests proceed to excesses of lust and of cruelty; or stupified by intoxication are locked up in insensibility.—The relations of Noah have divided amongst themselves his flocks and herds; for they ludicrously observe, “The good man is buried alive, and has no further need of them.” Or they anticipate the confusion he will
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be in, when his panic is over, and his apprehensions of a deluge proved chimerical. They have lately buried their great grandfather Methutelah, and every one enjoys the belief, that he is as firmly built for reaching the thousandth year. "*Come, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink, and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.*"^f Perhaps there are a few, who think more favourably of Noah than the rest; and one or two, possibly, who, almost persuaded that his counsel is the true wisdom, have formed a determination to apply to him for a place in the ark; but they think it hard immediately to abandon their diversions, and submit to be cooped up in a dungeon; they are loth also to expose themselves, unnecessarily, to the derision of their acquaintance; but resolve to watch closely, and fly upon the first token of the ruin predicted. — Wretched creatures! While you hesitate 'tis too late. — Behold *the windows of heaven are opened*, and the thick clouds darken the horizon. — Hark!

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^f Isa. lvi. 12.

What's that sound?—'Tis a clap of thunder.—The red lightening flashes, as if heaven was angry.—The tempest roars, as if the elements proclaimed war.—And the clouds pour down, not refreshing showers, but huge torrents of water.—Another sound succeeds.—The earth groans, as if it were in pangs of travail.—*The fountains of the great deep are opened;* and, on the impetuous tide, rides desolation in awful grandeur—Fields, houses and villages are laid waste.—The affrighted inhabitants climb the trees of the wood; but are suffocated by the tempest, or washed away by the flood.—Quickly the alarm becomes general.—Those that reside nearest the ark rush with consternation towards it.—They call, but receive no answer.—They attempt to burst it open, but in vain; the same divine hand, that shut Noah in, has shut them out.—Safe he hopes to be, who can fix himself upon the outside—Delusive hope! The tempest soon disengages that confidence which is strongest.—Others fly to the defended cities; but walls and fortifications are no bulwark against an invader,

vader, every moment reinforced by fresh supplies. — What crowds are seen upon the hills and mountains ! Deprived of their all, they yet wish to protract their lives, though it be in terror. — The enemy advances, their retreat becomes narrower, and their anxieties more prevalent. — They invoke the luminaries of heaven; but these have neither ears to hear the supplications, nor eyes to see the misery of their votaries, nor power to help them. — They even call upon the true God; but *he laughs at their calamity, and mocks at their fear.*^s — Despair, distraction and death close the dreadful tragedy. — While the despised ark, wafted upon the surface of the deep, triumphs over the guilty and infatuated world; upon the decrease of the deluge rests on the mountains of Ararat, and Noah, his wife and children (in all eight souls) with the beasts under their care, issue forth, after a confinement of twelve months, being reserved by providence, to be the means of replenishing the earth with beasts and men.

^s Prov. i. 26.

P A R T II.

THE history, thus literally stated, affords a positive and striking proof of the care and solicitude, with which the Lord regards those who have made him their refuge; and is not the alone instance, wherein he has distinguished them by his special protection, when *thousands have fallen on their right hand, and ten thousand on their left.*^b—But,

II. Were we to stop here, should we not omit some useful observations, the New Testament authorizes us to make? —The Apostle Peter, discoursing of the sufferings of Christ and their blessed effects to his church, makes a digression to the destruction of the old world, and the safety of Noah in the ark; and in the fullest manner declares, that *baptism* doth now hold out to us the *like figure* of
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^b Psalm xci. 7.

of salvation ; *by the resurrection of Jesus Christ* ;¹ for baptismal immersion, bearing the resemblance of a burial and resurrection, plainly points to the death and resurrection of our Lord, as the means of sheltering his people, from the wrath to come. Noah's ark, consequently, was a type of the blessed Jesus—and a lawful parallel may be drawn, between the salvation by means of the former, and that through the latter. This leads us, therefore,

1. To a recollection of the cause of the flood.—It was sin, the alone reason why the beneficent fountain of all good is ever displeased with the creatures of his own formation.—Sin, the root from which guilt and misery (bitter fruits!) derive their existence and support. As a wild beast, hampered in the toils, retains his savage nature, so sin, overawed by the judgment we have been treating of, still lurked in the hearts of the survivors. As the fire that lay smothering retains its inflammatory qualities, and, upon the application of combustibles, revives and

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¹ 1 Pet. iii. 21.

rages with renewed mischief, so sin broke out afresh, even in the conduct of those who were eye witnesses of the deluge; and spread its contagious influence over their posterity, notwithstanding the pious examples of the godly, and their strenuous endeavours to stop its daring progress; Inadequate to this desired effect, also, have been the keen-biting satire, the well-pointed ridicule, the grave rebukes of sages and philosophers, the wisest of civil regulations, the severest of human punishments. And that the evil examples of the wicked, have disseminated the practices of immorality with such facility in the world, evinces a most unhappy predilection in the mind for that which is sinful, and that the fountain must of necessity be polluted, when the streams, without exception, are impure. *The whole world lieth in wickedness,*^k was the complaint of old.—When has the fact been otherwise? I do not mean to enter into a circumstantial enumeration of the vices the world has abounded in; but leave it to experience to determine, whether, allowing

^k 1. John v. 19.

allowing for a few whom grace has made to differ; any age or nation can be mentioned, wherein sin has not been predominant? And *shall not the judge of all the earth do right?*¹ Can he behold, with indifference, his laws trampled under foot, and the order of his government, upon which the good of the whole depends, subverted? Is it not natural to infer, from what we know of his attributes and past proceedings, that he now takes cognizance of, and will in due time make a solemn inquisition into the actions of men? Scripture establishes the doctrine, that *it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.*^m Death, like an overflowing current, is with irresistible rapidity, advancing to all mankind. It will cover the most conspicuous stations, even *all the high hills under heaven. It hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;*ⁿ and the remotest hope of escaping it vanishes from our sight. Judgment, alike unavoidable, demands our deepest reflection, who are conscious of having broke the laws of the Most High.

It

¹ Gen. xviii. 25. ^m Heb. ix. 27. ⁿ Rom. v. 12.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,^o unable as we are to excuse our sins, to offer a compensation for them, or endure their punishment. *To them who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, he will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.*^p In this alarming situation, the most momentous question is, *What must we do to be saved?*^q Earthly affairs, of the highest consequence, are trifles compared with this question. The most laudable pursuits, independent of this, a mere waste of life. No folly can match that which toils for the accommodation of the body, in a precarious existence, and neglects the soul, whose happiness or misery will measure immortality—which pants eagerly for the applause of mortals, and regards not the smiles or frowns of God—which is anxious to provide for posterity, but not for its own everlasting welfare—which is sensible that the business of this world calls for care and industry, but unapprehensive that eternal concerns deserve as much greater earnestness, as the future state outweighs

^o Heb. x. 31. ^p Rom. ii. 8. ^q Acts xvi. 30.

weighs the present—is careful and cumbered about many things, and accounts upon easily accommodating matters with God, at the conclusion of life; vainly presuming, that a few ceremonious prayers, a few ostentatious acts of charity, and the credit given by the world, for its personal honesty, will be sufficient to appease the divine wrath, and an equivalent for the glory and felicity above—which holds the truth in unrighteousness, resting in the notional and lifeless profession of gospel doctrines, without the experience of their inward efficacy—or which half admits the necessity of *striving to enter in at the strait gate*;^{*} yet puts it off to a season more distant; reluctant, for the present, to forsake its darling pursuits, and vainly placing that confidence in futurity, which former broken resolutions, and the well-known uncertainty of our lives, render to the last degree dangerous. There cannot be a clearer proof of the deceitfulness of sin, and the degeneracy of the heart, even from the due exercise of the principles of self-

^{*} Luke xiii. 24.

self preservation, than the facility with which men are cheated out of their souls—the fond credulity, with which they receive the greatest absurdities, when served up as opiates to conscience—the tenaciousness, with which they grasp, at the risque of all to them valuable, any colourable salvo, to pacify the mind, and retain it in its adherence to Satan.—Not so those who are made *wise unto salvation*.^s—The example of Noah reminds us,

2. Of the practice of a person effectually awakened, to a proper discernment of his spiritual interests.——Noah was warned of God.—So were others repeatedly. Their insensibility ought to be imputed solely to their hardness of heart. But to what is the opposite conduct of Noah to be ascribed? He had *faith of the operation of God*;^t and his practice, so influenced, was agreeable to God's commands. The desolation foretold, he credited the prediction, and was moved with fear for himself and family. Instructed to build an ark, he duly weighed every particular of his instructions—not presuming

^s 2 Tim. iii. 15.

^t Col. ii. 12.

ing to follow any speculations of his own, concerning the form or size of the vessel; but wisely reflecting, that his duty was implicitly to copy the divine pattern. And, at the time appointed, he took shelter in that refuge, of which God was the all-wise contriver; at the same time, believing in that more dignified security, of which the ark was so descriptive a type. Thus, saith Solomon, *the prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself.*^a The gospel salvation is, in the strictest sense, the *salvation of God*;^b—the first motion of it came from him—he alone planned, he completed it—and, so well-adjusted are its several parts, that the whole forms a beautiful and noble structure, in every respect worthy of its author. The sinner, therefore, who is effectually apprized of the vengeance justly incurred, by his offences of heart and life, and of the doleful issue of approaching judgment to the wicked, enquires, with the utmost solicitude, about the way of escape. Pointed to the salvation of the gospel, he duly exercises his reason,

^a Prov. xxii. 3.^b Isa. lii. 10.

reason, yet supposes it fallible, and dreads to reply against infinite wisdom, or mix the imaginations of a corrupt heart with the counsel of God; but, *as a new-born babe, he receives with meekness^x* whatever appears to be revealed in the Bible, and is humbly desirous of being further enlightened. Taught to regard Jesus as the only safety of his soul, *he flies for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him;*^y and that full deliverance from wrath and sin, (which, while it reinstates the soul in the divine acceptance, unites holiness with happiness, and forms the heart into the divine likeness) is the alone ground of his trust and confidence, the chief object of his devoutest wishes. Christ is his *all in all,*^z the medium by which his prayers ascend to God, and by which blessings of every kind are communicated to his soul. To Christ he resorts. On Christ he leans his dependance. *The life that he lives in the flesh, he lives by the faith of the Son of God.*^a The love of Christ prompts his words, and actuates

^x 1 Pet. ii. 1.^y Heb. vi. 19.^z Col. iii. 11.^a Gal. ii. 20.

ates his works.—*Happy the people who are in such a case! Yea happy the people whose God is the Lord!*^b—We are led,

3. From the situation of Noah in the ark, to speak of the blessedness of being interested in Jesus.—If the ark was prepared for sustaining the attack of the tempest, and screening its inhabitants from the violence of the avenging flood, Jesus is, in a much higher sense, a refuge from the wrath of God. By the divinity of his character, the consummate holiness of his life, and the awful circumstances of his death, he has presented that satisfaction for sin, which may effectually secure the believing sinner from its penal consequences; and so safe are the souls united to him, that, *kept by the power of God*, not the force of temptation, the tribulations of the world, the terrors of persecution, the commotions of kingdoms and nations, or the dissolving stroke of death, are able *to pluck them out of his hand*,^c or essentially injure them; neither can the procedure of the awful day of judgment be unfavourable, since *it is God who justifieth*

^b Psalm cxliv. 15

^c John x. 28.

tifieth them,^d *it is Christ who died for them.*
 —If the ark was furnished with necessaries, for the subsistence of those it contained, it hath also *pleased the father that in Christ all fullness should dwell,*^e for the spiritual support and comfort of his redeemed. Not only is *their place of defence as the munitions of rocks, but their bread shall be given them, their waters shall be sure,*^f their real wants supplied, their sickness healed, their consolations abound, their *peace pass all understanding.*^g There is a treasure in the Lord Jesus, yea, unsearchable riches and righteousness, laid up for the use of those that possess a living faith in him. God comforts them in all their tribulations. He knows their souls in adversity. And that they are at times uncomfortable, is not owing to any deficiency in him, but to their own unbelief and want of appetite. They are not straitened in God, but in themselves.
 —It contributed, further, in no small degree, to the preservation of those in the ark, and to lessen the inconvenience of the

^d Rom. viii. 33.^e Col. i. 19.^f Isa. xxxiii. 16.^g Phil. iv. 7.

the confinement, that the animals shut up seem, for that time, to have lost their accustomed fierceness; and perhaps it may be allowed to call this circumstance, a shadow of that more glorious and permanent change, which passes upon the minds and tempers of all that partake of the christian salvation: nor need I insist long on the proof of the exalted and supreme felicity, that results from the change itself, when pride is reduced to humility, falsehood to truth, hatred to love, rancour to meekness and gentleness, hardness of heart to sympathy and compassion, and cruelty to benevolence and forgiveness; — in short, when *the former conversation, the old man, is put off, with his corrupt and deceitful lusts, and, through the enriching grace of God, the new man is put on, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.*^b——

Once more, after a similar but superior manner, that the waters which overwhelmed the old world, lifted up the ark, and settled it upon the mountains of Ararat, death is the believer's greatest good. He

18

^b Eph. iv. 23, 24,

is in Christ, and Christ hath waded thro' the flood, and founded its profoundest depths. He hath conquered death, and will carry his saints unhurt through it.— That event, which is deservedly the sinner's principal dread, will raise the godly above the effects of the curse—will waft them to the everlasting hills—will fix them for ever in the bosom of their Father and God—whilst *all they that are far from him perish*; ⁱ reminding us

4. Of the fearful end of the ungodly, who, not sheltered in Christ, are exposed to the wrath of God's incensed majesty— It is not always, that men will view these subjects with their present ease and indifference—not always, as matters of every one's concern, but their own. The most thoughtless and unaffected must enter personally upon the scene of action. And, methinks, I behold the unregenerate sinner, as a criminal expecting the stroke of the executioner.—He wishes for life, but a reprieve is impossible—he would fain bribe the king of terrors, but the stern tyrant is inflexible—he would call time back, but

ⁱ Psalm lxxiii. 24.

but it is gone out of hearing.—What sensations more keen, what sorrows more pungent, what lamentations more bitter and agonizing, than those over precious moments, whose presence has been unimproved, and their flight unnoticed—precious opportunities neglected and irrevocable—and a precious soul, stung with remorse, but not softened into repentance—enduring the terrors of the Lord, and uninspired by the hopes of the gospel? — Draw near, ye sons of vanity and mirth—Try if ye can stand the sight unmoved—make the reflections of your dying companion, the subject of your pity or your derision—pronounce the accusations of conscience, the effects of relaxed nerves, or the effusions of a disturbed brain—flatter yourselves, that, at a remote period, you shall encounter death with more firmness and composure—but know, that you are treasuring up materials for the picture exhibited—and God alone knows the issue.—’Tis a bold assertion, that none have been blessed with true contrition in the dying hour; but, it must be confessed, that to flake the
soul’s

soul's eternal welfare on the hazard of what may happen upon a death bed, is, though common, a species of gaming the most awfully foolish, as yet practised by an adventurous world. And what if we pursue these thoughts beyond the boundaries of time? — Suppose the sinner *to have no bands in his death*, or to fall unapprehensive of its arrival — to be surprized in carelessness, obdurate in impenitence, or deluded by false confidences. Follow him to the bar of God. — Behold him, accompanied by crowds of his fellow-immortals, waiting the just, the final decision of the arbiter of life and death. — At length the Judge descends, and, with unerring precision, separates the sheep from^d the goats. The laboured subterfuges by which the wicked have studied to impose upon themselves — to which they have fled to conceal their real characters, are laid open, and flee as a dream when one awaketh. How unavailing the petition, “*Lord, Lord, open unto us,*” *when once the master of the house hath shut to the door!* To what purpose the plea, “We have been called by thy
name,

name, partook of thine ordinances, *eaten and drank in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets*; when Christ replies, *I tell you I know you not, whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity? What weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets, and Israel of God secure in his kingdom, and you yourselves thrust out!*^k And where shall the guilty hide their heads, when *the heavens being on fire are dissolved—the elements melt with fervent heat—the earth, with the works therein, are burned up—and the hail sweeps away the refuge of lies*^l into the gulph of endless perdition? If the overflowing of the old world, as an historical fact, awakens our sensibility or terror, what feelings will be excited by the general conflagration, in those who are spectators of the event, perhaps nearly concerned in it! *Consider this ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.*^m *If he whet his glittering sword, and his hand take hold on judgment, he will render vengeance to his enemies, and reward*
F *them*

^k Luke xiii. 25. ^l Isa. xxviii. 17. ^m Psalm l. 22.

*them that hate him.*ⁿ How desirable, in the certain prospect of this wreck of our material system, to be able, upon sufficient grounds, to add with the Apostle, *Nevertheless we, according to Christ's promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness!*^o

ⁿ Deut. xxxii. 41.

^o 2 Pet. iii. 13.

H Y M N.

Look back my soul with holy dread,
And view those ancient rebels dead,
Attend the grace proclaimed, to day,
Nor lose the blessing by delay.

Seize the kind promise while it waits,
And march to Zion's heavenly gates.
Believe, and take the promis'd rest,
Obey, and be for ever blest.

DISCOURSE V.

Animal food permitted.

GENESIS ix. 3.

— *Even as the green herb have I
given you all things.*

“**W**HAT authority have you for eating flesh?” is a question put with great success to the champions of infidelity. They insinuate, that all necessary truth, and every part of duty, are so self-evident to the faculties of the human mind, that a revelation from heaven was not wanted, either to instruct us in their nature, or enforce them upon us. We demand then, “What license have you for killing the beasts, and converting them into food?” If they reply, “The brutes are of a lower rank in the creation, and designed for our
F 2 “use,”

“ use,” — be it so. — “ But though born
“ in a state of subjection and servitude,
“ still what right have you to put them
“ to death ? You did not send them into
“ the world ; and what authority have
“ you for sending them out before their
“ due time, and taking away that life
“ which you did not give ?” — If it be
argued, that “ Unless the beasts are slain,
“ the world will be overstocked with ani-
“ mals,” perhaps the fact might be
controverted ; but admitted, the utmost
it proves is, that when the necessity be-
comes indispensable, it may be expedient
to slay some, lest they should become bur-
densome. It will not warrant the daily
practice of eating them ; not to say, that
if the argument was extended as far as
it can reach, it would equally justify
the fomenting war, and promoting the
slaughter of mankind, lest the world should
be overstocked with men.—If it be urged,
further, “ The human teeth and stomach
“ seem to intimate that man is a carni-
“ vorous animal.—The brutes will die in
“ a lingering and more painful manner,
“ they do not suffer a violent death.—

“ And,

“ And, moreover, their flesh is so agree-
 “ able to our palates, and nourishing to
 “ our bodies, that it is reasonable to sup-
 “ pose they were created for our suste-
 “ nance.” I beg leave to observe, that,
 without further light, these presumptions
 are not better reasons, than a cannibal
 might adduce for feasting on his cap-
 tives. He might say, “ If I do not kill
 “ that man he will at last die—perhaps
 “ die in great pain and weakness of body,
 “ whereas I kill him in an instant. Be-
 “ sides human flesh is so much sweeter
 “ and more nourishing than any other
 “ kind of meat, that it must be lawful
 “ to feed upon it.” — If it be added,
 “ The brutes have no rational soul—are
 “ not accountable to God for their actions
 “ —and therefore death can be no loss
 “ to them,” — granted. But how came
 we to know all this? — Could we discern
 it by nature’s light alone? No. — Then
 a revelation from heaven was necessary,
 to make a distinction between the rational
 and brute creation. And it is solely from
 this sacred repository, that we have suffi-

cient warrant for putting the latter to death, for the common purposes of food.

Our text is the first permission of this nature in the Bible.—The primitive command was to eat the green herb, and the fruit of all the trees, one only excepted.^p And though it appears that, after the fall, Abel was a keeper of sheep, and beasts were sacrificed by him and Noah; yet not that they fed on them. Indeed the ground, at that time, brought forth in so rich an abundance, and of so nutritious a quality, that flesh, possibly, was needless. But the deluge has mixed up the earth to that degree, that it is not now as it proceeded out of the hands of its Creator. It has in many respects degenerated from its original beauty and excellence; in consideration of which, the merciful Disposer of nature has benevolently ordained, that the flesh of other animals should make a part of our sustenance; and to other favours, which the preceding verses enumerate, added, in the text, *Even as the green herb have I given you all things*; at the same time forbidding
the

^p Gen. i. 29.

the murder of the human species, and the use of blood for food; the reason of which last prohibition is generally supposed to be, that the blood was sacred, as typical of the blood of Christ, and to be used only in the sacrifices.

Now from the liberty here granted, there arise several important deductions — profitable subjects of meditation, and directions for our conduct in life.— As,

I. That though it be allowed to kill the beasts for food, yet it is not lawful to take away life, in an unnecessary or cruel manner.

There is an evident restriction in the words, *Even as the green herb.*—When the herbs are cut, some valuable end is presupposed, otherwise it is reckoned waste. The same limitation is to be observed with respect to the animals. Life may be innocently taken away, yet it is to be done just as far as it is of real use, and no farther. Animals are not to be slaughtered wantonly, nor blood shed unless to answer some proper and valuable purpose.—Is it for food? Is it necessary?—Then

do it.—But not else.—If, too, life is destroyed, let the stroke be to the victim, as easy and speedy as possible. To protract the pangs of death—to let an animal linger in misery that its flesh may be more delicate, however consistent with the refinements of luxury, contradicts the feelings of humanity, and is a wicked abuse of the indulgence permitted in the text. — And this leads me to venture another remark—that hunting, merely for the sport of the exercise, seems also here forbidden. No doubt there are cases in which hunting is blameless.—When it is for the procurement of food—when the creatures are hurtful to the community—and when they cannot be taken in any other way. But these are not generally the motives. To dispatch them speedily is accounted dishonourable, and contrary to established rules.—No. A timorous and helpless creature must be run down by a pack of dogs, till, its strength exhausted, it dies in an agony, or is torn in pieces, the sportsmen shouting over its fall as a mighty conquest, and having the greater enjoyment, the more misery
the

the animal was put to. The Bible so strongly marks this savageness of disposition, that it fixes a stigma upon Nimrod, as *a mighty hunter before the Lord*; and it is not improbable, that, from his ferocity of nature, and delight in tormenting the brute creation, the transition was easy, to his commencing a cruel tyrant and oppressor of his fellow-men, and a violent persecutor of good people; from whence it became a kind of proverb, in characterizing an enormous degree of barbarity, to add, *Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.*¹ And I sincerely wish, something could be said on this subject, more to the honour of our civilized nation, than that even the solemnity of law has been adopted, to *preserve the game*, or rather, with hold it from the indigent (who have a kind of peculiar right to it, and for whose subsistence it is an obvious and well-adapted provision) and confine it to the opulent, who have food enough and to spare, and are in no danger of suffering the pangs of hunger.—I submit these observations

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to

¹ Gen. x. 9.

to the judgment of the candid; and am persuaded they will make the deeper impression, if we properly attend to a

II. Thought from our text. The permission to eat animal food, leads to a reflection on sin the ruinous cause.—That creatures, who never offended God, are on our account subjected to death; nay, that they are slaughtered for the temporary support of our lives, at the time that it is an evidence of the exuberant mercy of our God, is a proof of the malignant effects of our sins against him. While, therefore, we receive the creatures of God with thanksgiving, we are called upon to receive them with humility. And, methinks, every meal of animal food should be eat in such a lowly frame and temper of mind. — See that chicken. — The hen gathered it, while yet an egg, under her wings.—She hatched and nourished it.—She watched it with the anxiety of a parent —She defended it from the birds of prey —She would not herself eat, that it might have sufficient —She would have risked her own life, rather than her
young

young one should be injured.—And for what eventual purpose was all this care and tenderness? That it might be killed, trussed up, and dressed for this or that person, because he has sinned against God, and the infirmity of nature cannot be sustained without such nourishment. — Behold that sheep.—Her mother brought her forth with pain, and suckled her with fondness.—White was her fleece, and her countenance meekness.—She seemed an emblem of innocence; and, as she grew up, united usefulness to harmlessness.—She was contented with a little.—Before her shearers she was dumb, and brought an yearly tribute to her master.—That wool, that kept her warm in winter, was by and by cut off, to keep her master warm—to be converted into cloathing for him and his family.—And, being herself a servant, she brought forth others equally her master's property.—But this is not all she is destined to.—Behold her taken from the field to the slaughter-house.—See her bound, and the knife raised to put an end to her life.—She is patient under all, and submissive as a voluntary victim.—Look at the

agonies of death she undergoes. — Your heart bleeds at the description, and can pursue it no further. — For what, let me ask, was this inflicted, if she was not an useless, or noxious animal — if she had done her master no injury, nor had provoked her Maker? Why, her master is a sinner, and a curse is denounced against him. — He must himself shortly die. — Sicknefs and disease, the seeds of mortality, lurk within and enervate his frame; so that if his body is supported, to go through the duties and fatigues of life, he needs another's strength to be added to his own; and the sheep, groans out her life for his maintenance. — That cow, also, gives milk to the whole family — The infant-offspring is nourished, with the finest particles of her blood. — Nay more, her milk is turned into butter, and cheese; and, of her own accord, she comes twice a day to be milked, as if to provide for others were to relieve herself of a burden. — But in time she, also, is ordained to the slaughter — knocked down — and the iron enters into her throat, that she may be cut in pieces. and man feed upon his provider.

And

And all this is necessarily done too. Let us look back and recollect, what a profusion of life has contributed to feed the vital flame within us! The beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the inhabitants of the waters have each furnished their respective quotas. We are debtors to each, and infinitely more to the merciful Provider. And to what good purpose, then, have we spent the days and years thus lengthened out? How many innocent creatures have yielded up their breath for the subsistence of men, abundantly more unprofitable than the beasts that perish^r — who, to judge from appearances, have

^r I am happy, since the composition of this discourse, to find the same reflections adopted by the pious and critical Dr. Watts. *Miscellanies*, page 58. *Energetus*, an useless member of society, convinced of the unprofitableness of his past life, puts up the following ejaculations. “ Above a dozen
“ feathered creatures, small and great, have, one
“ week with another, given up their lives to pro-
“ long mine, which in ten years time amounts to
“ at least six thousand. — Fifty sheep have been
“ sacrificed in a year, with half a Hecatomb of
“ black cattle, that I might have the choicest parts
“ offered weekly upon my table. Thus a thousand
“ beasts

have come into the world for no end more valuable than to eat—to sleep—to play—to do mischief and to die. If the brutes possess a nature inferior to our's, yet they answer the end for which they were formed, and instinctively fill up that sphere in which God has placed them. *Beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl praise the Lord.** If we are of a superior order, our obligations to duty are proportionable, and the crime of disobedience worthy of immediate destruction. Yet the beasts expire, that we may live; at least, that the hungry jaws of

“ beasts out of the flock and herd have been slain
 “ in ten years time to feed me, besides what the
 “ forest and the park have supplied me with. Many
 “ hundreds of fishes have, in all their varieties,
 “ been robbed of life for my repast, and of the
 “ smaller fry as many thousands. — And what
 “ have I done all this time for God or man? What
 “ a vast profusion of good things upon an useless
 “ life, and a worthless liver! There is not the
 “ meanest creature among all these which I have
 “ devoured, but hath answered the end of its crea-
 “ tion better than I. Every shrimp and oyster I
 “ have eat, hath filled up its place in the rank of
 “ beings with more propriety and honour than I
 “ have done: O shameful waste of life and time!”

* Psalm cxlviii. 10.

of death may for a time be satiated, and our sentence respited. How have we merited such favour? What an antidote to voluptuousness would result from a serious regard to these weighty considerations! Let wolves and bears rapaciously tear, and ravenously devour their prey. But it were to be wished, that rational creatures might partake of the bounties of Providence in a rational way. And sinful creatures ought to remember that on account of transgressions perpetrated by them, the whole creation groans and is in bitterness unto this day—remember this fact, as a motive to unfeigned sorrow for sin; and, from principles of gratitude, seek the improvement of those lives, which are maintained at so vast an expence.

III. There is another piece of instruction, which I hope may be naturally suggested from the words—I mean, the substitution of one life for another; and therefore, by analogy, the reasonableness of the doctrine of redemption through our Lord Jesus Christ.—I do not ground
on

on any thing here advanced, an argument for a doctrine that has positive and abundant evidence in other parts of the sacred scriptures. My design is merely an illustration of this glorious truth, which lies at the root of our religion.

The Jewish feast of the passover, which, in one view, commemorated the salvation of Israel, from the avenging sword that smote the Egyptians, in another typified *Christ our passover who was sacrificed for us.*^t Why then may not the permission of a more common and ordinary slaughter of the beasts, remind us of the death of our great mediator? — Let us pursue this meditation for a moment. — If the brutes know no crime, and the Paschal-lamb was ordained to be *without blemish,*^u [Christ Jesus was, in a more eminent sense, *a lamb without blemish and without spot.*^w *He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.*^x If the brutes are doomed to death for our benefit, Christ Jesus was so in a much higher degree—higher, as the sufferings endured were greater—higher, as the

^t 1 Cor. v. 7.

^u Exod. xii. 5.

^w 1 Pet. i. 19.

^x Heb. vii. 26.

the benefits conferred are more exalted. The beasts are killed, that their juices may be transferred into our bodies, for our strength and vigour; and, Christ Jesus was slain, that the virtue and efficacy of his death might be transferred to our spirits, and they might live through him. Let the short-lived sufferings then, of an animal, fix deeper in our remembrance, the excruciating agonies of the Son of God.—*He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter.—He was wounded for our sins, bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him.*^y—His holy soul knew no taint of sin; but the pressure of our guilt forced him to sweat even drops of blood.—*His visage was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.*^z—He was buffeted—spit upon—and crowned with thorns—inhumanly scourged—and *with wicked hands crucified and slain.*^a—The heavens were cloathed with blackness—the earth trembled to her centre, in sympathy with the Lord of nature; and no wonder, when, for the first time that a
complaint

^y Isa. liii. 5, 7. ^z Isa. liii. 14. ^a Acts ii. 23.

complaint dropped from his lips, his soul was filled with such awful sensations, that he joined the cry of his murderers, and exclaimed, *My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?*^b “When we consider
“how much a son will suffer from a
“father, or even from a friend whom he
“loves, before he divulge it to others,
“especially before enemies, it may make
“us reflect how much Christ suffered
“from God, when he, who loved him
“so much, expressed his suffering from
“him in such a manner, before such
“company!”^c—But it is finished, and transgressions are done away.—It is finished, and righteousness is brought in.—Jesus hath ascended to plead it—Faith lives upon it.—The humble sinner is justified by it—And obedience flows from it. One christian ordinance was instituted, in the form of eating and drinking, as a significant representation of this grand event, and the manner of being benefited by it. And, was the mind in a suitable frame, our common meals might be converted into spiritual food for our souls,
and

^b Mat. xxvii. 46.^c Maclaurin's Sermons.

and we might grow thereby. Let us suppose, for instance, that, while we are recruiting our bodily strength, and no useful conversation intervenes, our minds are conversant with one or other of these thoughts. “ I am now feeding on that
“ which, a while ago, lived as well as myself. It eat, it drank, and walked as I
“ do. It is now dead, and I shortly must
“ die. It died in a sudden and unexpected
“ manner, little aware, the moment before,
“ that it should be cut off. So may I
“ be taken away without any warning.
“ But this brute had no soul to be affected by its dissolution. I have a soul
“ that, if neglected, will be lost for ever.
“ This beast resigned its life, that mine
“ might be preserved. What have I done
“ to entitle me to such favour?—It had
“ no sin.—I have — Yet it dies, that I
“ may be spared. How good is the Lord,
“ to appoint this method of repairing the
“ daily consumption of our bodies ; and
“ how evil sin, which renders so affecting
“ an appointment necessary ! How
“ much more affecting the death of Jesus ! He died a lingering, a shameful
“ death

“ death instead of sinners. He is now
 “ set forth, in the gospel, as the life of
 “ his church. And if I am benefited by
 “ his death, I must have faith in him,
 “ which is expressively described by *eat-
 “ ing his flesh.*^d Simply to behold a feast
 “ will neither satisfy hunger, nor yield
 “ any nutriment: food must be eat, and
 “ thereby incorporated in our frame. The
 “ mere form of godliness will as little
 “ profit the soul. To obtain this I must
 “ apply to Christ, receive him, and, thro’
 “ grace, digest the truths of his word.
 “ Thereby I shall taste the sweetness of
 “ his salvation, become one with him,
 “ and, strengthened by him, be vigorous
 “ and chearful in the duties he calls me
 “ to.”—*To the pure all things are pure.*^e
 We want nothing but spiritual-minded-
 ness, to turn the most familiar occurren-
 ces into spiritual improvement, as the
 defiled mind does the best subjects into
 occasions of sin. And would not such
 meditations as I have suggested, be more
 profitable than that multitude of imper-
 tinent thoughts, and equally impertinent
 chit-chat,

^d John vi. 54.^e Tit. i. 15.

chit-chat, in which so many of our meals are wasted? Would they not be better, than to sit down to a table without thankfulness—eat and drink without reflection—and rise up—to play?—*If the word of Christ dwelt richly in us,^f our ordinary meals might teach us, whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,^g and to the glory of God^h—by the blessing of God be a foretaste of heaven to our souls—and prepare us for the banquet above, where we hope to feast upon the good things of Canaan's land, and drink of those pleasures, that flow from the right-hand of the Father for ever and ever.*

^f Col. iii. 16. ^g Col. iii. 17. ^h 1 Cor. x. 31.



DISCOURSE VI.

The confusion of tongues.

GENESIS xi. 6, 7, 8.

And the Lord said, Behold the people is one, and they have all one language, and this they begin to do: and now, nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence, upon the face of all the earth, and they left off to build the city.

THE farther we proceed in the history of mankind, the more we are struck with the deep-rooted inveteracy of corruption in the human frame, its effects universally prevalent in the world, and

and the consistent conduct of providence in restraining and punishing it.

As the most remarkable events of the antediluvian age, are the fall of our first parents, and the destruction of men by the flood, Noah and his family excepted, so one of the appearances, of greatest notoriety on this side the deluge, is the difference in the languages of men. The fact we know, various as may be the methods of accounting for it. Here are persons of the same shape, the same features, and (allowing for the difference of climate) the same complexion. They have the same appetites and passions, and agree in all the natural expressions of hope and fear, love, hatred and resentment, joy and sorrow, hunger and thirst; and also do invariably discover themselves, to be fallen and depraved creatures. They have, moreover, the faculty of speech, and may be understood by their own countrymen; but let them converse with the inhabitants of another country, and they will be no more understood than if they were dumb. Every nation has its peculiar and distinguishing mode of speech, and there
are

are almost as many languages as nations upon the earth. It is a worthy object of enquiry how this came to pass. It must be obvious, that confusion was not the original plan of the all-wise creator; from whence it follows, that some other matter has intervened to cause the perplexity. The Bible has that internal evidence of its truth, that it sets this, in common with other facts, in the most simple, natural consistent light, and accounts for it in a way, that cannot fail of being satisfactory, to an humble and modest enquirer.

The context, accordingly, is a professed history of the *confusion of tongues*; and my text a proper clew to what I intend, which is,

I. To consider the story itself; and

II. To draw such reflections from it, as may lead to the right improvement.

—In considering the story, the

1. Thing we meet with is, that mankind had, at this æra, only one mode of speech *The people is one*, said the Lord, one family, engaged in one design, and
he

he adds, *they have all one language.* It has been enquired therefore, (though it is rather of curiosity than consequence) "What was the first language spoken in the world?" and answered, that the Hebrew was spoken in paradise, before the fall, and in the world, before the flood — that, when the languages were confounded, the Lord preserved the primitive tongue in that family wherein he kept up the knowledge of himself — that this therefore is the holy tongue — nay more, that it is the language of heaven. But these are conjectures for which there is very little, if any foundation. The most probable side of the question is, either that the Hebrew was the language of the Chaldeans from whom Abraham was called, or of the Canaanites amongst whom he dwelt; and that it, and its kindred dialects are derived, from some original language which is now lost. — It is a question of much greater importance,

2. What was the reason why the speech of man was confounded? — This chapter informs us, that as the race of Noah encreased, they journeyed from the East.

—Uncertain as it is to determine the precise situation of the mountains of Ararat, (upon which the ark rested) yet they are generally thought to be in Armenia.— There we may suppose the family of Noah resided, till they became too numerous to be comfortable, and were forced to seek a more commodious settlement for themselves and their cattle. In this migration we are further taught, that they found a spacious plain in the land of Shinar, where they determined to fix their abode; and for this purpose resolved to build a city and a tower, whose top might *reach unto heaven*, that is, be exceeding high.ⁱ—An apprehension of a future deluge

ⁱ So the same word, in the same connection, signifies in Deut. i. 28.—ix. i. where the children of Israel were warned, that they had to encounter with a people the walls of whose cities were *fenced up to heaven*; nor can I find a single usage of the phrase in scripture, to support Mr. Hutchinson's opinion, that the top of the tower of Babel was at this time dedicated unto the heavens, and a temple for idolatrous worship; on the contrary, in Jer. xlv. 17. where Israel is described as burning incense *unto the queen of heaven*, a different prefix is made use of, to express the act of worship *unto* this false deity.

luge does not appear to have been their motive for building this tower ; for they could not have forgot the contrary promise, so uniformly ratified by the appearance of the rainbow.—Nor is the opinion better founded, that they had already so far lost sight of their Creator, as to worship the stars ; and that the top of this tower was intended to be a temple for the adoration of the heavenly bodies. Without having recourse to fancy, the true reason is suggested in the history itself, that the tower was built so lofty, to be a kind of mark, which the inhabitants of the world, as they multiplied, might not lose sight of, or remove far from. *Come, say they, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime (or bitumen, a kind of pitchy substance abounding in those parts) had they for mortar. And they said, Come let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.* Now the Lord disapproved of this scheme for several reasons.—It was contrary to his own command, to replenish

the earth,^k a command which implied, that they should transport themselves in colonies to different parts of the globe, and cultivate the earth.^l — By confining men to a particular spot, it tended to promote despotism and slavery, to render mankind subservient to the will of one man—of an enterprising spirit, such as Nimrod, or Amraphel, who might seize upon the government, tyrannize over the people, and dispose of their lives and property at his pleasure. — Where civil liberty is destroyed, religious liberty seldom survives it. The people, knowing no other law than the will of their sovereigns, would be led, by degrees,

^k Ch. ix. 1.

^l A learned writer has thrown out an ingenious conjecture, but which has no adequate support from history, viz. That some of the descendants of Noah did dutifully obey the command, and emigrate before this event, in allusion to which Peleg obtained his name, Gen. x. 25. 1 Chron. i. 19. The fact, however, as stated in the context, intimates that the disobedience was universal, or that if any dissented from the generality, they were too inconsiderable a number to make any alteration of the general resolution, or to be taken notice of, distinctly, under the description of *a division of the earth.*—

Bryant's Mythology, &c.

degrees, the lower ranks to worship the higher—the subjects to deify their princes, and imitate their bad actions—and, of course, the few who were influenced by a nobler principle, to worship the God of heaven, would be exposed to the persecution of their idolatrous and wicked neighbours.—At all events, pride was involved in the very terms of the proposal. They wished to be gods on earth, and to make themselves a *name*, that is, set up some monument of their grandeur, which might keep the rising generation in subjection, and for which posterity might admire and reverence them.^m “*And now, saith the Lord, they*

G 3

“ will

■ Mr. Parkhurst, after Mr. Hutchinson, objects to this interpretation, “How would their gaining “an immortal name with *posterity* hinder their *immediate* dispersion?” To which it may be replied, that their unanimous view to the veneration of posterity, would, by engaging them in one design, naturally prevent their separation.—He supposes, however, that the *name* they proposed to make, was an *idol*, and, as a parallel place, refers to Micah iv. 5. *For all people will walk, every one in the name of his God.* But I apprehend it is too bold a presumption, and hardly reconcileable with the

“ will proceed to greater excesses, think
 “ to act without controul, and *nothing*
 “ *will be restrained from them which they*
 “ *have imagined to do.*” He observed
 their project with displeasure, and de-
 termined, in the most effectual manner,
 to defeat it. “ *Come* (added the sacred
Three, as joint-actors upon the occasion)
let us go down, and there confound their
language, that they may not understand one
another’s speech.” — This leads us,

3. To the confusion itself. — The
 Hebrew word, in our text translated lan-
 guage, literally signifies *lip*. Some inge-
 nious writers have thought, therefore, that
 it was not a perplexity of speech, but a
 difference

the rules of strict argument, to infer, that because
 in a passage where an idol is expressly mentioned,
 walking *in the name* of the idol signifies making a
 profession of idolatry; therefore to *make a name*
 must have the same signification, in a passage where,
 with all the torture of criticism, no idol is even
 hinted at. — Another passage he adduces is more to
 the purpose, though it does not suit his design in
 quoting it, Gen. vi. 4. translated *men of renown*,
 is literally *men of name*, or, as we say, *men of note*,
 and is full to the point, that to *make a name* may
 signify to make themselves celebrated.

Parkhurst’s Heb. Lex. p. 381.

difference of opinion and sentiment, that parted the builders of Babel—" That they " disagreed, either about the intention or " method of building the tower, and " each following the party he liked best, " they were scattered over the face of " the earth, and left off to build the " city." But, besides that unanimity of sentiment and identity of language are particularly distinguished from each other in our text," if disagreement in opinion were the whole intended, methinks it would have had a contrary effect; they would not have desisted from their project, but contended for their several opinions, till the major party had forced the others into flight or submission. — 'Tis maintained also, " That the variation of

G 4

" tongues

" " *The people is one*, in view and design, and " *they have*, moreover, *one language*," v. 4. — If the *oneness* in both these clauses refers to their *opinions*, the latter is a needless and impertinent repetition of the former clause; and there is the less reason to understand it in that sense, that even its advocates confess the word *Shaphah* does in some other parts of scripture signify *speech*, as in Psalm lxxxi. 5. Isaiah xxviii. 11. xxxiii. 19. Ezekiel iii. 5.

Robertson's Clavis Pentateuchi, p. 93, note.

“tongues in the world was rather the
“effect, than the cause of the disper-
“sion of mankind. That men being
“scattered over different countries, and
“chiefly associating with persons of their
“own nation, by degrees the similarity
“of diction wore out, and a word that
“meant one thing in one nation, in ano-
“ther had a contrary signification.” —

But though a want of correspondence might account for part of this variation, yet not for all. It may account for the variation amongst languages nearly analogous, or that have had one origin, such as the Greek and Latin tongues; but not where the very form and construction of the languages do essentially differ, such as the Greek and Hebrew, the languages of Europe and that of China, the languages in general of the West,* and those of the Eastern world. — It seems then most agreeable to the appearances produced, to believe that it was a confusion of speech. And if the miraculous interposition of providence is to be regarded, even upon the scheme of a mere difference

* Wotton on the confusion of languages at Babel.

ence of sentiment, who will deny that the same almighty power could equally divide their speech? — By this means the enterprizing sons of men were disappointed, and scattered over the face of the earth. Those that could understand one another formed separate societies, and by degrees overspread the inhabited parts of the world.—Tis easy to see how, by a gradual encrease, they peopled Asia; and it is not impossible to account for their transmigration into Europe, Africa and America. For (not to mention the improvements afterwards made in navigation, and the possibility that persons at sea might be driven to a vast distance, wander about from island to island, and yet be wonderfully preserved to reach one and the other continent) Asia and Africa are united by the isthmus of Suez. Europe is separated from Africa, in one place only by the straits of Gibraltar; and from Asia, by the river Tanais, or Don, as it is now called.—It is confessed, that there are greater difficulties in accounting for the peopling of America. But (without insisting strenuously on the supposed

communication between the north east parts of Asia and the north west of America, either by a junction of the two continents, or by the straits of Anian) modern discoveries have sufficiently confirmed the feasibility, of allowing certain of the northern Asiatic tribes to have ventured over the ocean, which separates these continents ;^p and acquainted us further, that the Indians inhabiting the north east of America, bear a striking resemblance in their persons, manners, and even language, to the Greenlanders in the north west extremity of Europe, and that a narrow strait is the principal separation between them.^q These considerations evince the possibility of the dispersion of men over the earth, and how reasonable it is to conclude they had all one origin ; to add to which, we may observe, the similarity of many of the religious ceremonies, of even the savages, to those recorded in scripture, an argument, notwithstanding

^p Robertson's History of America, vol. I. p. 275
—280.

^q Crantz's History of Greenland, vol. I. p. 242
—244.

withstanding their corruption, for their derivation from the true religion.

As to the tower of Babel, history informs us that it had afterwards a temple built around it, dedicated to Bel (the Baal of the scriptures) that it made a part of the city of Babylon, and its top the Babylonians converted into an observatory for the contemplation of the heavenly bodies. In the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, it was enlarged by buildings of a mile in circumference, and adorned with gates of brass, probably out of the spoils of the Jewish temple at Jerusalem; but Xerxes, a future monarch, having sustained great loss in his war with the Greeks, demolished both for the sake of their riches, and plundered the temple of its images, one of which was equal to three millions of our money, and is supposed to have been the *golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the king set up* in the plain of Dura.*—Afterwards, Alexander the Great proposed to rebuild the tower and temple, but died before the accomplishment; and now, it is uncertain whether

G 6

any

* Dan. iii.

any part of either remains;—travellers are not even agreed about their situation.—I flatter myself this account of the confusion of tongues and population of the earth, will be satisfactory; and from the whole,

II. There are several remarks which point to the due improvement of the subject.—As

1. Have we not from hence additional proof of the pernicious nature of sin?—That very evil thing, which has separated men from God their truest happiness, has also separated them from one another.—In a former chapter we behold the whole world, first over-run with iniquity, and then deluged with water. Alas! That water could not wash away sin, though it destroyed the greatest part of the sinners. Sin was too deeply-rooted in the hearts of the survivors, for the warnings of providence alone, to eradicate it. Like an obstinate disease, whose outward symptoms are, for a time, checked, it broke out afresh. Here, therefore, we behold men again exalting themselves against God, and the Lord stepping in with another judgment

judgment—bursting the bonds of human society—dividing counsels, and even speech. — Doubtless it was intended to serve as a restraint upon the sinners themselves, as our text intimates. The Lord, by counteracting their design, as it were said unto them, “Hitherto shall ye go, but “no further;—here shall your ambitious “views be stopped.” He foresaw too, that the like restraint would be necessary for their posterity.—And is it not, also, a very heavy correction upon us?—Yes.—We feel it to be such, in the difficulty there is in understanding our fellow-men—the difficulty in matters of traffic and business—the difficulty and expence of time and money in learning languages—the many controversies and disputes subsisting in the world, from not understanding certain languages better. From all this darkness and confusion may we not discern, how evil it is to offend God? As Cain’s mark was a constant token of God’s displeasure against his crime, so we have a lasting memento, in our own experience, of the baneful effects of sin. When, therefore, we wish to converse
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with

with a person, but find he is of a different nation and language; it doth not become us to deride a man, who may, perhaps, possess as much good sense as ourselves, because we are ignorant of his meaning. To recollect the cause, to put up a sigh and be humble before God, would be a much more useful method of improving the providence. — What has not sin done? It has ruined human nature—mixed up the very earth, that our food is a slow poison—infected the air with contagious and pestilential vapours—caused such jarring in the frame of our bodies, that we feel its effects almost every hour—perverted the opinions and tempers of men, and spread feuds and oppression over the world—confounded the speech—and exposed the soul to the danger of eternal ruin. What a malignant poison—a fertile source of uneasiness and woe! How *worthy of all acceptance* is the news, *that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners* from sin—the *chief* of sinners!* — This weighty truth, duly attended to, leads us also from the
afore-

* 1 Tim. i. 15.

aforegoing account of the confusion of tongues,

2. To admire the love of God in Jesus Christ, that *in him all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,*^t and the method made use of, to communicate this blessing to the nations, by the miraculous *gift of tongues.*^u — Confined as were the privileges of the church under the Old Testament, the command of the gospel is *to teach all nations, and preach the word to every rational creature*^w One nation stands in as great need of Christ as another; and God has thought fit to collect his people, out of *all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues.*^x The privileges of the gospel, therefore, are *to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord shall call.*^y — Agreeably to which merciful resolution, God was pleased to provide, that even the confusion of tongues should not prove an impediment, to the progress of the gospel; but those whom he commissioned to dispense it, he miraculously endowed

^t Gen. xii. 3.

^u Acts ii. 4.

^w Matt. xxviii. 19. Mark xvi. 16.

^x Rev. vii. 9.

^y Acts ii. 39.

endowed with the power of speaking divers languages. The twelve Apostles, with most if not all of our Lord's first disciples, were illiterate, and, it is probable, could speak no other than their mother-tongue: but, under the influence of the divine Spirit, they were enabled to preach, in the respective language of each, to *Parthians, Medes and Elamites*, — to *the dwellers in Mesopotamia*, as well as in *Judea* — to those of *Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and Lybia, Rome, Crete and Arabia*. These people, to their amazement, *heard in their own tongues, the wonderful works of God declared unto them.*² In order to shew, also, that human or acquired learning is not to be despised, and that though, in some cases, he worked by a miracle, he was not always to be expected to do so, he fixed upon Paul as a chosen vessel, to declare his name unto the Gentiles. Paul was, at the time of his conversion, a man of deep erudition, master of most of the then known tongues, intimately acquainted with
the

² Acts ii. 7.

the writings of the Greek and Roman authors ; and, by means of him and his associates, was the gospel spread throughout the Roman empire ; nor could the policy or rage of its enemies, stop the progress of the sun of righteousness. From Rome it reached Britain, and other parts of our hemisphere. When the church of Rome assumed an unlawful jurisdiction over the consciences of men, eclipsed the glory of the gospel, and, to support the usurpation, excluded the common people from the use of the Bible, the Lord raised up instruments to oppose the power of Antichrist, and wrest the sacred scriptures out of his polluted hands. Hence we have God's word to read, and God's word explained, with the freedom of those who dare to think for themselves, and *search the scriptures daily whether these things are so.*^a From us the blessing of gospel light has crossed the Atlantic, has extended its benign influence to the American shore, and the wild Indian hears of Christ, and yields himself up to God. Nor shall the knowledge of the Most High

^a Acts xvii. 11.

High cease from its progress, till it has filled the earth as the waters cover the sea,^b until all the ends of the earth see the salvation of our God.^c — And

3. While we cannot but lament the confusion of languages in the world, we are called upon to bless God, for that *one spirit*,^d which has run through the hearts of his people in all nations and ages.—If the modes of speech amongst good people have varied, their experience of the life and power of divine grace has ever been materially, substantially and fundamentally the same. They have all understood the language of the spiritual Canaan. And though the knowledge of some may be more advanced, than that of others (as in all it is progressive) yet such truths, as are intimately connected with the life of religion, and necessary to salvation, each of them is experimentally acquainted with. They view God, as glorious in holiness—themselves, as sinful and corrupt creatures—sin, as deserving of our hatred, and of God's displeasure. They view Christ, as the precious,
the

^b Hab. ii. 13. ^c Isaiah lii. 10. ^d 1 Cor. xii. 13.

the suitable, the almighty Saviour, and are deeply sensible, that without him—without his righteousness—without his strength, they can do nothing. They love God, and love the people of God. They have their treasure in heaven, and their conversation as becometh the gospel. This is an *unity of spirit*^e that has diffused itself through the church of Christ. The prophet Ezekiel foretold therefore (in the parable of the dry bones) that when the church of Christ was formed, under the gospel, and in the latter days particularly, it should be *one nation*.^f And the Apostle Paul points out the fulfilment of the prophecy, by telling us, that the word is sent with the view of gathering together *in one*, all things in Christ; and that Christ has slain the enmity, formerly subsisting between jews and gentiles, to *make of twain one new man*,^g one new church including both. This is a very important reason for regarding affectionately, *all them that love our Lord Jesus in sincerity*.^h
— And there remains 4. A

^e Eph. iv. 3.

^f Ezekiel xxxvii. 22.

^g Eph. i. 10.—ii. 15.

^h Eph. vi. 24.

4. A consideration yet more animating; I mean Heaven, where the confusion we now deplore will be done away, and the harmony perfect — no jarring note, but every string in unison. The brightness of heaven will dissipate all our darkness, nor shall sin, any more, becloud our views of God and things divine, or draw away our hearts from those objects that alone can make them blessed. In heaven, one soul will, as it were, animate the whole body of Christ; there will be, in the highest sense, but *one Lord, and his name* and worship *one*ⁱ — one sheepfold under one shepherd, and *God all in all*.^k The joys of heaven will be one; and whatever the language may be, as it is natural to conclude that its refinement will set it infinitely above every earthly composition, so that it will also be one. Thus we read of an innumerable company, taken out of *all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and, in concert, praising God and the Lamb*.^l Happy day, when all the sons and daughters of God are brought

ⁱ Zech. xiv. 9. ^k 1 Cor. xv. 28. ^l Rev. vii. 9.

brought home, from all quarters of the earth, and, in one grand chorus, extol that God and Saviour, whom, here below, they united in adoring and praying unto!—Do you love the worship of God now? Are the praises of the Most High the delight of your heart, and your song in this house of your pilgrimage? Are you sensible of the value of salvation, and indulging admiration of the love of God in it? Ere long, you will join the society and triumphant employment of the redeemed above.—May the vigorous and believing hope of this felicity be frequently in our thoughts, to bear up our spirits amidst the toils and sorrows of life—to lead us to undervalue the world—to excite us to purify ourselves, as those that are rendering meet for an *inheritance among the saints in light*^m—to influence us to live in peace, as the cheerful expectants of a speedy translation, to the realm of perfect and everlasting serenity.

Reluctant as I am to turn your eyes for a moment, from so glorious a prospect,
I cannot

^m Col. i. 12.

I cannot avoid remarking, for the consideration of some who may need the reflection, that the language of hell is also one—that of distress and agony, of groans and despair, of *wailing and gnashing of teeth.*ⁿ Hath God, at an infinite expence, provided a Saviour? Hath he *exalted his own son, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins?*^o Hath he, by the pen of inspiration, transmitted to you *line upon line, and precept upon precept?*^p Hath he supported his own cause in the world, and instructed a race of ministers, to declare unto you the whole counsel of God? — What if ye trample upon the riches of his grace? — Will not your punishment in the future world, be dismally augmented by your slighted privileges in this state? And will not your dark abode re-echo the bitter lamentations, of time mispent and mercy despised — God dishonoured — Christ disregarded — and your own souls lost for ever? — Ye cannot sin at so cheap a rate as those who have not been warned, nor had the gospel preached unto them. *See, then, that ye*
refuse

ⁿ Mat. xiii. 42. ^o Acts v. 31. ^p Isa. xxviii. 10.

*refuse not him that speaketh : for if they
escaped not, who refused Moses who spake
on earth, much more shall not we escape,
if we refuse Jesus who speaketh from hea-
ven.^a*

^a Heb. xii. 25.

H Y M N.

I.

SIN's deep infection (direful taint !)
What mind can trace, what tongue
can paint ?

Sin, a world's ruin could not stay,
Nor deluge-waters wash away.

II.

Unaw'd by judgments on the dead,
See, Babel rears her impious head.
Presumptuous mortals ! thus who dare,
'Gainst heav'n to wage th' unequal war.

III.

God spake — and strait th' attempt was
vain :

Confusion instant through them ran,

To

To stop the scheme, which pride gave
 birth,
 And them to scatter in the earth.

IV.

Yet did thy mercy interpose,
 Great God ! thy gospel to disclose.—
 Nations, immers'd in darkest night,
 Hail'd and ador'd the heav'nly light.

V.

The diff'rent tongues, before thy throne,
 Agree to prove religion one ;
 Whilst heav'n-born spirits join to praise,
 Redeeming love, and changing grace.

VI.

With these blest souls would I unite :—
 Their exercise make my delight.
 Forbid it, then, that I should share,
 In the dark realms of black despair !



DISCOURSE VII.

Hagar's motto.

GENESIS xvi. 13.

— Thou God seest me.

FROM the knowledge of ourselves—
from the documents of the word
of truth—and from the suggestions of
christian charity, we are constrained to
admit, that, in the hearts of the pious,
there may be some light and much re-
maining ignorance, some governing prin-
ciples of religion though many errors,
some of the genuine work of grace
amidst many undetected, and therefore
unallowed imperfections.

If we do not form this estimate of the character of piety in the present world, we shall be in perpetual anxiety concerning our own state towards God, and per-

H

plexed

plexed concerning the state of others, in whom we behold substantial indications of the reality of the good work, and also many things to stumble and grieve us.—Great allowances are to be made for innate and early received prejudices—great allowances for different degrees of discernment—great allowances for natural temper and disposition—great allowances for disadvantages of attaining instruction—and great allowances for habit and custom—so great, as to convince every thinking person, of the propriety of the advice adopted by the great Apostle, from his divine Master, except in cases which are very manifest and indisputable, *to judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come.**

These are, also, the best excuses that can be pleaded for the failings of good men, so faithfully recorded in the Bible.—Happy is he who can so separate between the error and the man, as to disapprove of the former, and yet give the latter that respect, which is due to the evidences of grace in him.—I will not under-

* 1 Cor. iv. 5.

undertake to defend every fact related in this chapter. There were great liberties taken, even by men eminent for holiness under the Old Testament, which would appear shocking to christianity; — such was that of having more than one wife. *From the beginning it was not so;** but God created them male and female, and ordained that *a man should cleave unto his wife, as one flesh,*† and as the most likely method of their being help-meets to each other. An abuse, however, was introduced, of having not only one wife, the acknowledged mistress of the family, but one or more secondary wives, who were subject to the mistress, and, frequently, servants bought with money. This irregularity, considering the darkness then subsisting, the hardness and obstinacy of men's hearts, and their very deficient ideas of morality, God winked at; but, under the more refined dispensation of the gospel, has strictly forbid. And if the prohibition is weighed attentively, its friendly aspect will be clearly discerned. Polygamy, in the nature of things, cannot

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be

* Mat. xix. 8.

† Gen. ii. 24.

be a means of promoting mutual happiness ; but, on the contrary, jealousy, discord and uneasiness. How much more comfortable was Isaac with Rebekah, his only wife, than Jacob, than David, than Solomon, with their wives and concubines ; or Abraham, with Sarah and Hagar as this chapter relates ! — Sarah, indeed, was in the whole affair more to blame than her husband. A son being promised to Abraham, she rashly took the fulfilment of the promise into her own hands ; and, as the most probable method of its accomplishment, proposed to him Hagar, an Egyptian servant, as younger, and more likely to bear children than herself. Perceiving afterwards, however, that she was despised in the eyes of her maid, in consequence of her own proposal, she turned accuser, quarrelled with Abraham for his compliance with her request, and used her maid so rigorously that she fled, willing, rather, to try her lot in the world, and encounter any difficulties in her return to her native country, than endure the hard usage of her indignant mistress. — Resentment, we may suppose, added wings to her

her flight, and strength to her resolution, the courage or thoughtlessness of which may be guessed from this one circumstance, that she ventured alone and unprovided upon the wilderness of Shur, that vast and burning land, which Israel, after their passage through the Red-sea, traversed three days without finding any water."

The extremity she also was reduced unto, before she made this discovery, is to be collected from the narration, notwithstanding its brevity. She sat at a fountain of water, revolving melancholy ideas, and, as it were, unwilling to rush into greater danger. Affliction seems to have cooled her resentment—to have made way for deliberation—to have brought to mind her fault, in first treating her mistress with contempt and rudeness, and then abandoning the duty she owed her—to have convinced her, at last, that even Sarah's severity was preferable to her present deplorable condition. — In this dreary and dismal solitude, she was surprized by a voice, accosting her in a familiar manner,

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and

" Exodus xv. 22.

and claiming the knowledge of her and her connections ; “ *Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou, and whither wilt thou go ?* ” — We may well imagine the quickness of her start from the melancholy trance, and the eagerness with which she cast her eyes around, to explore the person who was her companion in that lonely situation, and so exactly described her, and the relation she bore to her mistress. Perhaps she thought Sarah was softened by her flight, and, pitying the hardship ill-usage had driven her to, had dispatched a messenger to find out, and restore her to the family ; or else, that some forlorn traveller over the desert had recognized her person, having seen her before in Abraham's family. Company, in her circumstances, was a most desirable object ; and, taken so at unawares, a crowd of thoughts forced themselves instantaneously into her mind. But she quickly perceived the messenger to be that extraordinary personage, so frequently spoken of in the Old Testament, as the *angel of the Lord*, and the *angel of God's presence*.* — Im-
mediately

* Isaiah lxiii. 9.

mediately it occurred, that God had spied out her wanderings, and it would answer no valuable end to prevaricate or conceal the truth. The question of the angel contained as much, as that she had fled from a family of religion, to return to a land where the worship of the true God was not known—where the grossest idolatry prevailed. Without hesitation, therefore, she confessed the fact, apologizing the displeasure of her mistress as the reason: but her own misconduct made that impression on her heart, that the dread of future anger did not prevent her, from embracing the advice of the angel, *to return to her mistress, acknowledge her fault, and submit herself under her hands; that is, be obedient to her government.* And so sensible was she of the favour of the divine interposition in her case, that she invoked him who addressed her, in the words of our text, *Thou God seeest me*; and, in token of her astonishment, that a vision of the Almighty had been afforded a sinful creature, and yet she lived, she called the well at which she sat *Beer-lahai-roi*, literally, *the well of the living, seeing*;

seeing ; for she said, *Here have I looked,—* or do I live here and enjoy my sight, *after beholding him that seeth me ?*—With these sentiments she returned, and in time became the mother of Ishmael (so called to perpetuate the remembrance of this event, the name signifying *God shall hear*) in whom, and whose posterity, was fulfilled the prediction of the angel in this chapter, that her *seed should be multiplied so as not to be numbered for multitude* ; but yet that Ishmael *would be a wild man, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him, and, therefore, he should dwell in the presence of all his brethren,* that is, encamp, with his descendants and adherents, in large companies for their better security ;* for Ishmael himself inhabited the desert, became an archer, (living probably by plunder or hunting) and he was the father of those numerous tribes of Arabs, which once over-ran a great part of Europe by the name of Saracens, and do infest these deserts unto this day—a wandering, uncivilized multitude,

* Harmer's observations on divers passages of scripture, vol. I. p. 100.

tude, subsisting by treachery and rapine —“ in continual war with all the world” —whom the greatest conquerors of the east have attempted in vain to bring into subjection ; and, to prevent whose depredations, travellers are obliged to march in great caravans, or companies, armed, and escorted by a military force.* — But to return.—

I do not mention this as the only visit of the kind, Hagar was indulged with, but the first ; perhaps that, also, which brought her to know more of God and of herself, than she ever had done before. — She now understood that God saw her, even when she was not apprehensive of his presence, and put it down as a truth never to be forgotten, *Thou God seest me.* — I shall be allowed to add, that it is a fine sentiment, easily committed to memory, equally applicable to us, and deserving of our uniform attention and regard. The doctrine it holds out is strictly demonstrable.—God must see us as he is present every where.—He must be present

H 5

every

* Bishop of Bristol's (Dr. Newton) Dissertations on the prophecies, vol. I. p. 42.

every where, because he is unlimited, and his presence is as necessary in all, as in any part of his creation.—The very same reason, which proves his existence necessary in one place, will demonstrate the necessity of his existence in all places.—But *who can by searching find him out? Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection? He is high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know? His measure is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.*² It is easy, in speaking of the incomprehensible Jehovah, *to darken counsel by words without knowledge.*³ Rather let us lie prostrate at his feet, and, with reverence and humility enquire, what may be deduced for the due improvement of the weighty subject?—Doth God see us? We are taught hence, to dread sin—to seek peace with God—to fear being deceived—to attend conscientiously to duty—and to derive comfort.—

I. To dread sin. — Whence do men live in the practice of criminal indulgences?

² Job xi. 7, 8, 9.

³ Job xxxviii. 2.

gences? Is it not that they forget God, put him away from their thoughts, and inconsiderately *say in their hearts, there is no God*^b Can a man seriously think, “God sees me—takes notice of all my ways—*knows my down sitting and up-rising*^c—*tries my reins and my heart*^d—*understands my thoughts afar off*—surveys all my words, and is acquainted with all my goings”——can a man, under a right impression of these solemn truths, wilfully commit that which displeases the Lord?—No. Let the grace of God speak to the heart, in that powerful manner the angel did to Hagar, and it will teach the soul, to live as *seeing him who is invisible*,^e and avoid sin, from the love and fear of God;—the love of God inclines it to hate that which is opposite to God’s nature, and disagreeable to him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;—the fear of God to tremble at that which provokes his wrath. These principles carried into the life, engage to watchfulness over the heart,

H 6

lips,

^b Psalm xiv. 1.^c Psalm cxxxix. 2.^d Jer. xi. 20.^e Heb. xi. 27.

lips, and conduct; and are an antidote to the temptations of Satan, the deceitfulness of sin, and the snares of the world. Such a man will no more dare to sin presumptuously against God, than insult his best friend—he would as soon run his fingers into the fire, and suppose them a match for the burning flame, as contend with the Almighty, and match himself against his Maker.—Do others roll *sin*, as a sweet morsel, *under their tongues*?^f *How shall he do this great wickedness and sin against God?*^g—Do others swear profanely, and take the name of God in vain? God sees, and *will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.*^h—Do others traffic in lies and falsehood, to conceal their crimes, to defame their neighbours, or subserve their own mercenary designs? God sees, and God is a God of truth, without iniquity.—Do others venture on secret sins, and believe themselves secure in the practice, because the world is not a witness? “*Whither shall I go from thy spirit,* says the godly soul, *and whither* “*flee*

^f Job xx. 12. ^g Gen. xxxix. 9. ^h Exodus xx. 7.

*"flee from thy presence? The darkness
 "hideth not from thee, but the night
 "shineth as the day; the darkness and the
 "light are both alike to thee"* — Does his
 business in life present him with any op-
 portunity, whereby he might take an art-
 ful advantage, for his own emolument,
 by over-reaching his neighbour? What
 though men may never know it, yet
 God sees, he thinks. — Hence he is an
 honest, and fair, because a pious and
 conscientious man, doing what he does
 heartily, as unto the Lord, and in all
 his ways acknowledging God — And yet,
 though he hates and fears sin, he is deeply
 and humbly sensible, that in many things
 he has offended; and therefore,

II. This thought, *Thou God seest me*,
 is a strong reason for seeking peace with
 God. — Sin is denominated in scripture,
*the quarrel of God's covenant,*ⁱ as it in-
 volves *enmity against God,*^k and the *Lord*
is angry with the wicked every day.^l If,
 therefore, sinners did think at all, it
 would be matter of melancholy reflection,
 that

ⁱ Lev. xxvi. 25. ^k Rom. viii. 7. ^l Psalm vii. 11.

that God sees them, and from him they cannot be hid ; — “ God sees me, and “ he sees me to be his enemy ; he sees “ me, and I cannot evade his notice.” — Are we here ? God’s eye is upon us. Let us go elsewhere, his eye will follow — will rather prevent us. Adam hid himself from the presence of the Lord, but God found him out. — Cain denied the murder of Abel, but God knew it. — Jonah imagined he should be safe from the reach of the Almighty, if he escaped to Tarshish, but God met with him ; and when he slept, his iniquity pursued him. God met with him in the midst of the sea, and to Jonah it was a tremendous meeting. Will it not be so to any of us, if we fly from the Lord, to the amusements of the world, or the pleasures of sin — tremendous to meet God at death — tremendous to meet him in judgment ? Are we able to deny our offences ? — No. Ananias and Sapphira flattered themselves of the secrecy of their wicked concealment, believing the detection impossible. But their lie bid defiance to the Holy Ghost, by implicitly denying

denying his omniscience ; and that Spirit testified his knowledge of the most hidden things of dishonesty, by confronting the shameless prevarication, and inflicting a most awful punishment.—That same Spirit, also, testifies, that *if we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar.*^m—And who can bear the indignation of the Lord ? If we groan under the comparatively light afflictions of the present life, *which of us can dwell with everlasting burnings ?*ⁿ—And what is hell, but the presence of a God of inflexible justice — *a consuming fire* — as heaven is his presence diffusing mercy ? Say, is it not desirable, to be at peace with the Most High ? — For this purpose then, the advice of God's word is, *Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace.*^o The former part of which implies, a deep and ingenuous shame for sin, proceeding from the knowledge of God, and leading to a voluntary and penitent confession of it unto him ; — the latter, a believing acceptance of mercy, according to the plan God has revealed ; and both are the production of divine
grace

^m 1 John i. 10. ⁿ Isa. xxxiii. 14. ^o Job xxii. 21.

grace in the contrite heart. The good effects of such a temper, are pardon and justification, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, reconciliation with God by the death of his Son, the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, whereby the soul is comforted, and, at the same time, its love is kindled, its affections are conciliated, and it resigns itself, to be and do whatever the Lord pleases. *We love him, because he first loved us.*^p This it is to be at peace with God; the farther happy consequences of which will come under future consideration. In the mean while, that God sees us, suggests,

III. The importance of an holy jealousy over ourselves, and fear lest we be deceived, in the momentous concerns of religion. — Certainly God cannot be mistaken. With the most perfect nicety, he perceives what we are. And if he cannot be imposed on, what shall we get by deceiving ourselves? Get? A public detection in the day which will try every man's

^p 1 John iv. 19.

man's work.—Get? A fatal dissolution of the charm, whereby we have been deluded, and the sad reality of irretrievable and eternal ruin.—By cheating another, a man proposes some acquisition to himself. To cheat himself is an inconsistency, which words can hardly apologize for. And carelessly or negligently to lose his soul, is an extreme of folly, compared to which madness itself is wisdom. Whence, then, are so many contented with the shell of religion—the mere outside of worship? Alas! they think not at all of God, or they think him *such an one as themselves*.^a *God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth; for such the father seeketh to worship him,*^r intimating, that he ponders the path of the just, and discerns between those who are, and are not his true worshippers. *Examine yourselves, therefore, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, that Christ Jesus is in you, except ye be reprobates?*^s Have we more than the name, the profession of Christians?

^a Psalm l. 21. ^r John iv. 23. ^s 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

ans? God requireth *truth in the inward parts*; has he then, *in the inward man, made us to know* divine and spiritual wisdom? Do our humility and regard for Christ Jesus—our communion with God and love to righteousness, for its own sake and for God's sake—our weanedness from the world, and the devout aspirations of our souls after the pure enjoyments of heaven, evidence our renovation after the image of God, and that Christ is in us the hope of glory? It is a mark of fairness and honesty, when the conduct meets examination. It is a property of true religion, that *in its spirit is no guile.*^u The simplicity and godly sincerity of a real christian is manifested, by nothing more than the conviction he has, of the deceitfulness of his own heart—the freedom with which he proposes himself to the scrutiny of God's word—the diligence of his endeavours, not merely to quiet his mind, but to have his doubts substantially resolved—the earnestness of his cries to the fountain of light to be searched and tried.

Thou

^c Psalm li. 5.

^u Psalm xxxiii. 2.

Thou God seeft me, he fays; “let me
“not mock thee nor myfelf; but lead
“me in thy own right way, and *that*
“*which I fee not teach thou me.*” — Yet
farther,

IV. Does God fee us? What a powerful incitement to the confcientious difcharge of duty! — He fees our improvement or wafte of our precious time; whether it is fpent in the way of holinefs, whether heedlefsly fquandered in the purfuit of this world, or foolifhly lavifhed in ferving divers lufts and pleasures. — He fees what account we make of our talents; whether we prize, and lay them out for God and the profit of our fouls, or hold them cheap, and bury them in floth and fin. — He beholds our ufe or abufe of the means of grace; whether our advantages are effectual for our inftruction, or leave us in darknefs and ignorance — *are a favour of life unto life, or of death unto death.*” How vaft a change would be, in the manners, the behaviour, the profeffions and practice of people, if this weighty thought were continually

tinually before their eyes !—Do we read or hear God's holy word? God sees; let us read with reverence and attention——let us hear it, not from curiosity or mere custom, but as it is indeed the word of God. Do we pray in secret or public? God sees; let us remember whom we are addressing, and that not the pomp of words, but the humble, the devout breathings, of a broken heart, are the sacrifice he regards with pleasure. God sees the day of rest; whether our sabbaths are sanctified and separated for himself, or mixed with the cares, and employments of life—whether ministers study so to discharge their respective duties, as to be *pure from the blood of all men*^x—whether the members of his church are *servent in spirit, serving the Lord*^y—whether parents and heads of families zealously aim at the spiritual benefit of the souls committed to their charge—and whether *children obey their parents in the Lord*.^z God sees the days of work and business; whether the servant, the apprentice, is faithful to his master, the labourer to him that hired him,

^x Acts xx. 26.^y Rom. xii. 11.^z Eph. vi. 1.

him, or works *with eye-service, as a man-pleaser*.^a—God sees whether the rich trust in uncertain riches, and seek only their own gratification, or deal out, with a liberal hand, to the necessitous, of that which he hath for this purpose entrusted them with;—he sees, also, whether the poor are satisfied with the allotment of providence, and providing things honest, in the sight of all men; and he sees, whether the magistrate is vigilant for the public good, active in restraining vice, vigorous in the advancement of regularity and piety, as the surest pillars of national freedom and prosperity. No rank or station of life, in short, is exempted from the obligations arising from this solemn reflection. *Whatsoever duty, therefore, thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might*,^b for God sees and God remembers.——God sees and God will judge.——Once more,

V. It suggests a ground of consolation to good people that God sees them; for *the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth*, particularly to distinguish,

^a Eph. vi. 6.

^b Eccles. ix. 10.

guish, and *shew himself strong in the behalf of them, whose heart is perfect towards him.*

This was the comfort offered by the angel to Hagar, *the Lord hath heard thy affliction*, and it is comfort common to all the people of God.—I will suppose you also, christians, to be, as it were, in the wilderness—your souls distressed and beclouded—perplexed with doubts and fears, from your own unbelief—and your anxiety heightened by the devices of the devil.—Or, I will suppose your situation in life to be greatly afflicted, and that the farther you proceed, the greater are your discouragements—your laudable attempts to extricate yourselves meet with disappointment, perhaps bewilder you the more—you look round, but all is a desert, destitute of relief, and out of which you can perceive no path—you even pray to God, and are ready to say, “He hideth his face from me, and hath forgotten to be gracious.”—Yet remember, who sought out Hagar in the wilderness of Shur.—It is not the unusual method of the providence and grace of God,

God, to *bring* his children *into the wilderness*, to suffer them to hunger and thirst (that is, feel their own emptiness, weakness and insufficiency) before he *speaks comfortably*^d unto them. Brought up in constant fulness, like indulged children, we should not know the value of our mercies, if we did not sometimes know their want. But still, *the eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.*^e You think yourselves desolate and alone; but God is near, though invisible. — When you pray, he hears, though he may seem to disregard. — When you are unable to describe your case, his Spirit penetrates the gloom of your mind, and sees the meaning of your prayers, through *the groanings which cannot be uttered.*^f — And when the night of trouble is darkest, and your hearts most overwhelmed within you, then may the morning of consolation be nearest. — At all events, *the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations;*^g and how to order that deliverance, so as that

^d Hof. ii. 14.^e Psalm xxxiv. 15.^f Rom. viii. 26.^g 2 Pet. ii. 9.

that it may not fail of its due effect, on the persons to whom it is administered. *Unsearchable as are his judgments, and his ways past finding out,*^h there is enough for faith to stay upon, in the deepest adversity. God sees your strength, and is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation also, make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.ⁱ — God sees your enemies, and will so defend you, that you shall not be greatly moved.^k — Every possible snare and intricacy of your situation God sees, and will guide you with his counsel.^l — Though poor and needy, the Lord thinketh upon you.^m — If the world fails, and friends forsake, Jesus is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.ⁿ — When grey-hairs multiply, strength departs, and the grasshopper shall be a burden,^o Jesus is the same, his people's unalterable support, yesterday, to day, and for ever.^p — His love softens the languishing bed — smooths the rugged

^h Rom. xi. 33. ⁱ 1 Cor. x. 13. ^k Psalm lxii. 2.

^l Pf. lxxiii. 24. ^m Pf. xl. 17. ⁿ Prov. xviii. 24.

^o Eccles. xii. 5.

^p Heb. xiii. 8.

ged visage of death — receives the departing spirit — and when the kindest office, which the tenderness of surviving relatives can afford, is to bury our body out of the sight of men, still his eye watches over the sleeping dust, to re-animate and *fashion it, like unto his own glorious body.*⁹ — In one word, though the obscurity of temporal things gives a forbidding aspect to the day of trial — though the dimness of our spiritual eye-sight, may raise surmises in our minds, of the goodness and faithfulness of God — and though the flesh is apt to complain, the brightness of heaven will cast that lustre on past dispensations, as to put it beyond a doubt, that the very *hairs of our head have been numbered*^r (the minutest circumstances of our lives attended to) — and that, with the most consummate wisdom and affection, God has directed our wandering feet, to his temple above. *Comfort yourselves and one another, then, with these words ;*^s — wait diligently on God, in the way of duty ; — *trust in the Lord with all thine heart,*

I

and

⁹ Phil. iii. 21. ^r Mat. x. 30. ^s 1 Thess. iv. 18.

and lean not unto thine own understanding ; ' — and let that be your song, in the land of your pilgrimage, which will ever be the theme of your triumph, in the kingdom of glory, Thou God seeſt me.

^t Prov. iii. 5.

H Y M N.

I.

LORD, thou haſt ſearch'd and ſeen
me through ;
Thine eye commands, with piercing view,
My riſing and my reſting hours,
My heart and fleſh, with all their powers.

II.

Could I ſo falſe, ſo faithleſs prove,
To quit thy ſervice and thy love ;
Where, Lord, could I thy preſence ſhun,
Or from thy dreadful glory run ?

III.

O may theſe thoughts poſſeſs my breaſt,
Where-e'er I rove, where-e'er I reſt !
Nor let my weaker paſſions dare
Conſent to ſin, for God is there.

D I S.

DISCOURSE VIII.

The righteous a blessing to nations and communities.*

GENESIS xviii. 32.

And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

AMIDST the variety of people the world contains, there is one sort, perhaps the least known and esteemed; these are righteous people.—Righteous and good, indeed, most wish to be thought. It is a fine, though reluctant, compliment paid to religion, that, at least, the character of belonging to it, is thought a desirable acquisition. But to be actually righteous very few seem con-

I 2 cerned.

* Preached February 10, 1779, being the day appointed, by public authority, for fasting and humiliation.

cerned. — Persons of this complexion are generally looked upon as odd, precise and unaccountable. Their manners and customs are so different from those of the multitude, that, if no worse treated, they are stared and laughed at; and have often been treated as the *off-scouring of all things*,^u and driven out of the world with disgrace and infamy.

Yet mean and contemptible as they appear, the God of heaven esteems them more than all the rest of mankind. *The Lord has set apart him that is godly for himself.*^w God has made them righteous by his grace, through the redemption of his Son. He has made them righteous, by the implantation of his Spirit. He has called them from a state of unrighteousness — changed them and made them *new creatures*^x — a righteous and holy people. And he not only favours them, with peculiar marks of his regard, but the world also on their account. While the world lieth in wickedness it lieth in darkness, and the beauty of true piety not being discerned, it cannot be loved
for

^u 1 Cor. iv. 13. ^w Psalm iv. 3. ^x 2 Cor. v. 17.

for its own sake ; but were the wicked truly concerned for their personal welfare, that concern would immediately determine, for the superior excellence of righteousness ; for the fact is, they would be in circumstances infinitely worse than they are, were it not for the comparatively few godly persons, whom the Lord has raised up in the midst of them.

My text is one proof of the truth of this remark.—*The men of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim and Zoar (five petty states in that extensive spot of the land of Canaan, called formerly the vale of Siddim) were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.* Their situation was well-watered by the river Jordan, and is described to have been, in an accommodated sense, pleasant and fruitful *as the garden of the Lord.*^y One cause contributing to its fruitfulness, and its destruction also, was the bituminous or pitchy nature of the soil, which (warmed by the sun and probably by internal heat) produced a verdure and plenty, that invited crowds of families to settle

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there,

^y Gen. xiii. 10, 13.

there, where their labour in cultivating the ground would be so amply repaid, and where less pains were required in procuring this abundance, than other parts of Canaan, remarkable as it was for fertility. Of course we must conclude, that these cities were the principal repository of the riches of that country; and that the inhabitants, indulged with ease and affluence, gave into many of the studied elegancies, improvements, and luxuries of life. The scripture particularly notifies their *eating and drinking*, their *buying and selling*, their *building and planting*; ² so that we may suppose houses to raise their heads, fields and gardens to be enclosed, and wealth, with its attendant voluptuousness, to be scattered in every corner. *Fulness of bread and idleness*, ² indeed, had that unhappy effect on their morals, that they were, not only a softened and sensual people, but are to this day infamous to a proverb.—Yet it seldom happens, but desolating judgments are preceded by some warnings, some calls to repentance. Even Sodom and its confederate

² Luke xvii. 28.² Ezekiel xvi. 49.

federate cities were warned, when Chedorlaomer, the tyrant of Elam, envying their ease, and aware of the feeble resistance they could make, fought and enslaved them; — they were warned, when after twelve years servitude, or at least tribute, they attempted, in their own strength, without repentance and reformation, to shake off the yoke and regain their freedom; but all the effect was, that Chedorlaomer and his allies overcame and carried them away captive. Nor was it a small reproach, that Abraham the friend of God (who took part in the quarrel on account of his kinsman Lot, and who, in rescuing his relative, surprised the conquerors and relieved the captive princes) at the same time viewed their conduct with that detestation and horror, that he would not accept of the least gratuity, no not of the spoils he had gained from their enemies, lest the nations around should imagine he was connected with them, or gave the remotest countenance to their crimes; and he should dishonour God, by affording the king of Sodom occasion to say, “ *I have made*

“*Abraham rich.*”^b — How unavailing the admonitions of providence, where there is not an ear to *hear the rod, and him that hath appointed it!*^c Their deliverance from one tyrant only secured them the faster, in the possession of another. Their outward freedom regained, instead of being excited thereby to thankfulness, and *the goodness of God leading them to repentance,*^d they became more and more confirmed in the vilest of slavery, that of sin; and sunk into that worse than brutality of manners, that he who made them, determined to have no mercy on them. — In the following chapter, therefore, we have a most awful account of the last calamity, which completed the destruction of them, and the region in which they dwelt.

A particular mark of respect was shewn Abraham above all his neighbours, that God would not *hide from him the thing which he did.* He was honoured, accordingly, with a visit, by three angels, two of whom quickly departed towards Sodom, the third remained with Abraham :

^b Gen. xiv. 23. ^c Mic. vi. 9. ^d Rom. ii. 4.

ham : and, by the extraordinary homage the Patriarch paid him, appears to have been some representation of Jehovah himself, dwelling in our nature — in other words, of the Son of God. No other can be eligibly meant, by *the Lord who said unto Abraham, Because the cry, or report, of Sodom and Gomorrah is very great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me, and if not, I will know*; a mode of expression which ought not to be understood, as if God had not certain information of the matter; but is an adoption of “the language of a good judge, who never passes sentence, much less executes it, till he hath examined the cause^e :” and signifies, that he would convince them he observed their proceedings, and, upon the fullest evidence, pass sentence agreeably to the rules of his unerring justice. — Unsuspicious of danger as were the men of Sodom, the pious Patriarch felt and prayed for them, who never thought of praying for them-

I 5

selves.

* Patrick in loc.

selves. Their depravity was so notorious that he durst not palliate it; yet he ventured, with humility and with tears, to intercede for them, at least upon supposition, that there might be a few righteous amongst them. *Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?* says he; *That be far from thee to do after this manner. Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city; wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place, for the fifty righteous that are therein?* The Lord agreed, it should, upon that condition, be spared. Thus encouraged, Abraham proceeded to reduce the number to *forty five*, and his request was granted. It was afterwards gradually lessened, to *forty*, to *thirty*, to *twenty* and even *ten* righteous; and the Lord graciously acquiesced, replying, in our text, *I will not destroy it for ten's sake.*

But while he acceded to Abraham's petition, and it would seem the venerable man flattered himself, the life of the city was obtained, these kind concessions were not of any benefit to Sodom; for alas! inconsiderable as was the number specified, there could not be found *ten* righteous
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in it. — One godly man only lived there. It was very imprudent to go thither. He consulted his temporal rather than spiritual interest, and he smarted for it. The country was pleasant, but his soul was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. His substance was destroyed with the city. His wife *looking back*, and loitering, reluctant to quit her possessions, was overtaken by the shower of divine indignation, and turned into a *pillar of salt*, as a lasting monument of her folly. And, as soon as he and his two daughters were deposited in Zoar, the Lord rained fire and brimstone from heaven, upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain, Zoar excepted, and *Abraham gat up early in the morning, to the place where he stood before the Lord, and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain*, anxious to know the success of his petition; *and he beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.*^f

The particulars of this dire catastrophe

I 6

inform

^f Gen. xix. 27.

inform us, that, previously, the morning was clear and serene — the sun rose on Sodom with its accustomed brightness, and the face of nature smiled — no preternatural darkness shut out the wished-for day — no shaking of the earth, no thunder or lightning predicted the impending ruin — the people were reclined at their ease, after the riot of the preceding night — the sons in law of Lot mocked at the very idea of danger, and his wife but half believed it. — Too late, alas ! they find their mistake, when the armies of heaven are suddenly collected — the dark cloud rises — the artillery of the skies begins its dreadful discharge — the storm beats upon their defenceless heads — the aerial fire surrounds them, and renders their escape impossible. — Imagination paints, with horror, their doleful shrieks, while met, wherever they fly, by the flaming tempest ; and is rather relieved by being told, that, the action of the fire having formed a vast cavity within the earth, the whole country sunk, at once, into its bowels, and was covered by the waters of Jordan, forming

forming a pitchy and sulphureous lake (called the Dead-sea, because immoveable by the winds, and so unwholesome that no fish can live in it) which smokes frequently to this day, and actually emitted flames, some thousands of years after this its first formation.

To impute the foregoing melancholy event to natural causes — to draw a parallel between it and the casual eruptions of *Ætna* or *Vesuvius*, is so to weaken the force of the narration, and of all the instruction to be learned from it, that at most it can be considered only as a misfortune, which might have happened to any place not so abandoned, and actually has befallen many places, whose character was not remarkably infamous. The scripture explicitly points out the immediate and extraordinary interposition of the Almighty, through the ministry of holy angels, as the direct cause of the calamity, and even lodges in the appointment of the celestial messengers, the precise moment of its taking place; circumstances which cannot intend less, than that magazines of fire were hid in the bosom

bosom of the air, which, emptied upon the devoted cities, co operated with the combustible matter beneath them, to render the conflagration universal. — And the miraculous agency of God, in the whole, admitted, the story solemnly intimates, that sin is a reproach to any people, provoking to the God of heaven, and followed by his wrath. This is true of every species of iniquity: for *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*;* now revealed, by way of threatening, in the Bible, and will in due time be revealed, by way of punishment. If Sodom and Gomorrah were awfully visited with fire and brimstone, the iniquity of the Amorites was then, also, filling up; and the Lord did afterwards, as deservedly avenge himself of them. When the impiety of other nations comes to a certain height, judgments may as certainly be expected. But though the obtainment of Abraham's request could not, as matters were circumstanced, be of any benefit to Sodom, it may teach us the value of good people,
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* Rom. i. 18.

in a city or nation, that so few would have been a blessing to this city. — The words of the text, *for ten's sake*, lead us to enquire,

I. For the sake of what, in the righteous, God spares the wicked? And,

II. What reflections may be deduced, for the due improvement of the doctrine?

I. For the sake of what, in the righteous, does God spare the wicked? — And it may be answered, For the examples — the prayers — and even the presence of the righteous.

I. For the righteous examples good people exhibit. — Wickedness of every kind dishonours God — is an insult offered to his majesty — a contempt of his holiness — a disregard of his goodness; and the intention of punishment is, either to correct and restrain, or to make the offenders an example for the terror and reformation of others. Such correction or judgment, therefore, honours God, by bearing a positive testimony against sin, and

and giving a public proof of its evil. But this testimony do God's people bear, by the uprightness of their lives. They shew forth, thereby, the glory of God, and the beauty of holiness. By their words and behaviour, they tacitly reproach the conduct of the wicked. And on this account, God is often pleased to suspend his judgments from particular places.—He looks at his saints—sees his own work in their hearts—they are *his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works*; and, approving of their piety, he *endures, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction*, for the sake of the vessels of mercy, which he hath *fore-prepared unto glory*.^h Such is his love of holiness, that he is, as it were, more pleased with the exemplariness of a few (who perhaps, for that very reason, are despised by the world) than enraged at the opposite behaviour of the many.—What a God of love is our God! How evidently is judgment his strange work, and mercy a delight unto him; that for the as yet very imperfect traces of his
image

^h Rom. ix. 22.

image upon his children, he bears with the evil practices of his enemies ! But *so it seemeth good in his sight.*ⁱ—And, more than this, the examples of the godly may be the means, of converting sinners from the error of their ways, and therefore the Lord may spare such wicked persons, and others with whom they dwell. The righteous are the *salt of the earth.*^k Their conversation is not of the nature, of those *evil communications* which *corrupt good manners* ;^l but seasoned with grace, and may be of use to communicate spiritual life to others. We are apt, when we behold transgressions multiply, and but few appearing for God, to put up a melancholy sigh, and say, “ Ah ! This is a place “ devoted to destruction. Soon the fear “ of the Lord will be totally banished, “ and his judgments showered down.” — But who can pronounce that this will be the case ? Who can say what good effects, even the righteous examples of a few may produce ? May not their uprightness shame the multitude, who behold their chaste conversation in Christ ? May not
their

ⁱ Mat. xi. 26. ^k Mat. v. 13. ^l 1 Cor. xv. 33.

their exhortations and reproofs be further blessed, for reformation and conversion? And will not honour redound to God thereby? Is there not reason to hope then, that where the Lord continues a people to glorify him (and especially where they are very earnest) he has some good to do by their means—some to call from the way of sin—some to change, to the love of Christ and holiness—some to be added to his peculiar people? Methinks there is. And, therefore, he exercises long forbearance, towards nations and communities that are wicked, for the sake of his own children whose lot is cast there. — Nor may the examples only of the godly be of use, but

2. Their prayers also. — The people of the Lord are reconciled unto him, and beloved by him; and, as our Lord observed concerning himself, that the Father *heard him always*,^m so the pious petitions, which the righteous put up at his throne, are accepted in the beloved; and many of their prayers God hears, not only for themselves but for others, even for the wicked.

^m John xi. 42.

wicked. The Apostle James tells us, accordingly, that the *effectual fervent* (that is, the energetic) *prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*^a So Abraham interceded for Sodom, and the Lord heard him. True, it was not of any avail to the city; but yet Abraham obtained all he asked. Perhaps if he had solicited, he would have obtained more.—Perhaps, condescending as the Lord was to the former parts of his request, it was an imprudence to stop at *ten* righteous. — Perhaps the story conveys to us this instruction, that, while we pray for places wherein sin abounds, we ought not to stint God's mercies, or limit the Almighty, but continue instant in prayer, though there may not be *ten*, or even *two* righteous in such places. *Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, saith the Lord, and see now and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be one that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it.*^o—One important truth, however, we are certainly taught, that that
place

^a James v. 16.

^o Jer. v. 1.

place must be, indeed, abandoned to its degeneracy, which the prayers of God's people cannot reach. It must be deluged in wickedness, if God will not hear his *hidden ones* ^p for it. When Israel sinned in the matter of the golden-calf, the Lord said unto Moses, *Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them.* ^q Nevertheless, on the petition of Moses, and for the sake of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, while he often corrected Israel, on that and other occasions, as a nation he spared them. — The happy influence of prayer was seen also, when Joshua cried, when Samuel prayed, when David interceded. Elijah was a man of like passions with ourselves, yet his prayers were of efficacy, to withhold rain from the land of Israel, when the correction was necessary, and restore the blessing, when the chastisement had, in some measure, fulfilled its commission. — Had God respect to the partial repentance and transient reformation of Nineveh, at least to respite its punishment for a considerable time ?

^p Psalm lxxxiii. 3.

^q Exodus xxxii. 10.

time? And will he turn a deaf ear to his own children, prostrate before his throne, seeking mercy for themselves and others? No. If he exercises their faith, and they have long patience, yet in the end he will hear, and send an answer of peace. *I exhort therefore, says the Apostle, that first of all, as a duty of the highest importance, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings and for all that are in authority; for saints and sinners; for the church and the world; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.* — May God help you, christians, in the present day of great declension, of publick difficulty, and of danger, to distinguish yourselves *as the generation of them that seek his face.* — How valuable on this account also, are good people! — I add,

3. The very presence of the righteous, is the security of the wicked amongst whom they dwell.—The tenderest father, the most affectionate mother cannot have that regard for a sucking child, which
will

^r 1 Tim. ii. 1.

^s Psalm xxiv. 6.

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will bear the most distant comparison, with the love of God to his children. He observes, with the most assiduous attention, all the frames of their souls, the states of their bodies, and every circumstance of their lives. And to testify his respect for them; or, lest by an indiscriminate execution of justice they should be injured, the tokens of his displeasure against sin have been often delayed, often with-held, and sometimes remarkable salvations afforded. The companions of Paul's shipwreck experienced the benefit of having *one* godly man amongst them. *Lo*, said the angel to him, *God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.*¹—The designs of God's providence, respecting his people, are not perhaps compleated. They are to keep their appointed station a little longer, and to bear a further testimony against sin. Providence therefore does not immediately open a door for their removal. It may be they are left amongst the wicked for the proof and manifestation of their own graces, as well as for the glory of God. Or they are not

¹ Acts xxvii. 24.

not yet ripe enough for heaven, and God continues them longer, in this state of trial. Therefore *thus saith the Lord* (concerning the land, the city, the town wherein they dwell) *As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, destroy it not, for a blessing is in it — some life, some hope of it remains, so will I do for my servants sakes, that I may not destroy them all.*" — Noah and his family were housed in the ark, and the Lord had shut them in, before the deluge overflowed the old world. — There was but one good man in Sodom; and not till he had departed, and was lodged in Zoar, did the Lord rain upon Sodom fire and brimstone. *I cannot do any thing, said the angel, till thou be come thither.* Nor was Zoar itself more deserving than its neighbouring cities, yet it was preserved at the instance of Lot, and because of his presence in it. See, added the heavenly messenger, *I have accepted thee concerning this also, that I will not overthrow this city for the which thou hast spoken.* — The presence of the godly, indeed,

^u Isa. lxy. 8.

deed, cannot prevent individuals of the wicked from dying and going to hell; but, in public and national distress, it has been of great efficacy for the suspension if not total prevention of the calamity.

— The prophet Elijah complained in his haste, upon one occasion, “ All men
“ are liars ; *The children of Israel have*
“ *forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine*
“ *altars, and slain thy prophets with the*
“ *sword ; and I, I only am left, and they*
“ *seek my life.*” But God had reserved to himself, in that day of corruption, seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal ;* and the presence of these worshippers no doubt, (to say nothing of the short-lived humiliation of Ahab) contributed to the delay of that judgment, by which the civil-polity of the ten tribes remains to this day totally dissolved. — While there remained any of the sincere disciples of Christ in Jerusalem, it was not given up to the desolation to which it had devoted itself ; but when the christians, warned by their divine master, had escaped from the city, the

* 1 Kings xix. 18.

the sentence of their Lord was awfully executed, not a stone being left upon another that was not thrown down, and the flower of the nation given up to the sword. — And, to mention one proof more affecting than all the rest, it is for the sake of the comparatively few godly inhabitants, that this world is upheld from perishing. As long as God has any to call by his grace and nurse up for the celestial regions, the safety of the world is thereby insured. God spares it, because he has valuable property in it. But as soon as the election of grace is filled up, and the body of Christ completed, wrath, impatient for the vindication of God's righteous government, will burst forth, and the polluted theatre, on which so many scenes of impiety are transacted, be burnt up. — Awful event, to the earth itself, and the sinners who cleave to it ! — The tares and wheat are now mingled together, and the Lord says to the avenger of his justice, “ Let the tares alone : root them not up, lest with them ye root up the wheat also.” It teaches us great caution and tenderness.

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ness.

ness, in determining upon the salvation of other people ; and that in cases of difficulty, the safest and wisest method is to suspend our opinion. — *Judge not, that ye be not judged.** In the terrible day of the Lord, the unerring, the final decision will pass, and the present mixture disappear. No more will the righteous at once benefit and grieve the wicked ; but each be assigned to the place for which they are now training, with the companions, whose friendship and association they have principally coveted — the wheat gathered into God's garner, the tares bound in bundles to be burned. — In the mean time, the examples, prayers, and even presence of the righteous, meet in full proof of their value, in any state or community where they reside. — Let us enquire,

II. What instructions may be gathered, for the improvement of the doctrine we have been illustrating ? And

I. Do we not learn from hence, highly to esteem good people of every denomination ?

* Mat. vii. 1.

nation? Precious and honourable in the sight of their God, they ought to be so in our sight; and will, if we have any substantial evidence of our own relation to God; for *by this we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.*^y Such are highly estimable, for their affinity to the Most High and likeness to him — for that intrinsic worth with which grace has endowed them — for their usefulness in the world, and happy influence on human affairs. — Highly favoured of heaven, *the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,*^z and whosoever disesteems a good man, disregards the impress of the divine image, despises a character which approaches to perfection, and is ignorant of his own mercies. I have read somewhere, of a chief promoter of one of the persecutions, that have stained the annals of this island, who on his death-bed sent for two of the reformed ministers to pray with him. Before the ministers had concluded, some of his late companions made him a visit, and being informed who were

K 2 within,

^y 1 John iii. 14.

^z Prov. xii. 26.

within, one observed, with great solemnity to the rest, "*We banish these men from us, and yet when dying call for them; this is melancholy work.*"— And so it was. It teaches us, what different views of religious matters people may have, when flesh and heart fail, from what they possess, in the vigour of life and health. Perhaps there is a moment coming, when the stoutest-hearted sinner I speak to, will wish to be in the state of the christian he thinks meanest, and whom he most despises. If, then, you have any regard for yourselves, love good people—esteem them highly in love for Christ's sake, for the sake of what God has done for them, and the good he does by them—covet to be near them—to be in their company, to converse with them—join with them in prayer to God—seek their prayers for yourselves—and rather chuse to be amongst the godly, with all their poverty and infirmities, than in the tents of wickedness, however splendid. So Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, chusing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy

enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.^a

2. We learn from what has been said, how to form a true judgment concerning the strength of a nation. — The real security and prosperity of a nation does not consist in the greatness of its riches, the largeness of its trade, the magnitude of its fleets, the number or experience of armies. — No. — These are, at best, but secondary considerations — dependencies that may fail, when their support is most urgent. Where sin has diffused its baneful, its enervating influence, the proudest kingdoms have been brought low, yea brought to nothing. On the other hand, wherever godliness has prevailed, God has ever appeared for such a people ; *five have chased a thousand, and an hundred put ten thousand to flight.*^b In the present critical and distressing state of our national-affairs, then, is it not much to be wished, that the power of religion was more known, and the practice more attended to ? O

K 3 that

^a Heb. xi. 25.

^b Lev. xxvi. 8.

that all parties would turn their eyes within, and impartially enquire how matters stand, between them and the great Disposer of all events — would return to God, and seek his kind interposition! Then we might still hope, God has a favour for Britain.—Religion, my brethren, is of no party but the Lord's.—I fear religion is kept at too great a distance, by all parties.—But at last, it is the only thing that can help us; and if it is not sought in the first place, our councils will be turned into foolishness, our arms be the contempt of our enemies, and our nation fall under the load of its own guilt. — Therefore

3. If good people are the best security for national-happiness, how affecting to behold them die, without others raised up in their stead! — Our pious *fathers, where are they? The prophets, do they live for ever?*^c No.—Whether men are converted or not, they must die; and whether there are any or not, to succeed the godly, and fill up their places, in the church and the world, the godly must die,

^c Zech. i. 5.

die. The church militant is continually draughting some of its members, for the church triumphant. And, when their time comes, the most useful must depart; — useful ministers, who warned men to flee from the wrath to come; — useful members, who adorned the gospel of Christ, and shone as lights in the world. Is it not greatly to be regretted, and danger apprehended, when the number of these valuable persons decreases? Let me ask then, whether we have not ground in the present day, for the prophet's lamentation, *The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come?*^d Let me ask, whether with all the talk about religion and pretensions to it amongst the survivors, the principle itself is not at a very low ebb? — Low indeed, when its professors can mix placidly with the profane, and make them their chosen companions — when the duties of secret prayer, family-religion, and the Lord's-day are neglected or hurried over; but

K 4 the

^d Isaiah lvii. 1.

the business or amusements of the world plied unweariedly, and even the threatening aspect of public affairs is unable to restrain from the favourite diversions of the times.—When many pastors slumber over their flocks, and wink at, perhaps join in their vices—when the solemn truths of the Bible are generally disregarded, except as the subject of ridicule—when, even among the adherents to the doctrines of God's grace, there is, frequently, more zeal for right opinions, than their powerful and practical influence——when the strifes, animosities and divisions of the house of Israel, shamefully proclaim to the world, that the love of many waxeth cold—and when not a few, who appeared to walk with Christ, forsake him.—If judgment begin at the house of the Lord, what a shattered inconsistent profession will be found, in the present day! And what can be expected of the rising generation, who have such examples before them, and of whom little or no care is taken, to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?—On the other hand, is there not additional reason to be
alarmed,

alarmed, when profaneness and impiety, luxury, intemperance, pride, debauchery, the love of pleasure, and infidelity, or else Popery (the convenient refuge of the wicked from the troublesome accusations of conscience) are making large strides over the land — and when, though our contending politicians agree to blame one another most illiberally (and both sides must be very bad, if all is true that they say of each other) yet *they speak not aright; no man repents him of his wickedness, saying, What particularly have I done,*^c to incur the divine displeasure, and cause the threatening tokens complained of? — I do not mean to insinuate, that our case is desperate. — I hope not. — But if piety and holiness are, in the persons of God's people, taking their flight to heaven, and instead of the fathers who glorified God, the children rise up to dishonour him, it is high time for the real friends of their country, who trace the hand of providence in the direction of human affairs, to cry unceasingly, *Help, Lord, for the godly man*

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ceaseth,

^c Jer. viii. 6.

ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men.^f — Above all,

4. If good people are the nation's best security, it calls upon each of us, to seek to be godly. — "To be virtuous and "regular, honest, generous, compassionate "and sober—to be good friends, good "neighbours, and good citizens—to acquit ourselves well in the station, where "in providence has placed us"—doubtless. — But it is yet further, to be deeply sensible of the majesty and holiness of God most high—to be seriously concerned for the welfare of our immortal souls—to be humbled for our sins—to make our earnest application to Jesus, for pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace—to live a life of faith, of prayer, of communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ—and, in the divine strength, to walk in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. — If it is an happiness, to reside in the society of people of this character, it is a much greater favour, to partake of the same spirit; — it will make us a blessing to ourselves

^f Psalm xii. 1.

selves and others, to our neighbourhood
 and nation. National success and national
 reformation will ever go hand in hand ;
 and national reformation cannot consist
 otherwise, than in a personal reformation
 of the individuals, of which the nation
 is composed. O ! that the main attention
 of each may be directed to himself — to
 herself, *to turn every one from his evil way,*
and from the violence that is in their hands :
Who can tell, but God will turn and repent,
and turn away from his fierce anger, that
we perish not ? ^g — At all events ; let
 the worst come, *say ye to the righteous, it*
shall be well with him. ^h God will hide
 his children in the hollow of his hand.
 He is their refuge and cannot fail — he
 their shepherd, and they shall not want
 — their strength, and what shall overthrow
 them ? — More than all, he is their sal-
 vation ; and should national devastation,
 involve them in the common ruin — should
 there be one lot, to the righteous and the
 wicked, in this dark state, where time
 and chance happeneth to all men, yet
neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor prin-

K 6

cipalities,

^g Jonah iii. 9.

^h Isaiah iii. 10.

*cialities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate the righteous from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ their Lord.*¹ They shall rise above the stroke of mortality — lose nothing by death, but what now often encumbers their minds, is, at best, of the lowest value to them, and for the loss of which, *the rest that remains* will infinitely compensate, when *the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, will feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water, and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes*^k — for ever. — How light, how momentary, are the keenest earthly afflictions, while viewed through the medium of heavenly glory — a medium pure, and unsullied by any mixture of corruptible matter, and enlarging to the eye of faith, the boundless prospect of eternal tranquility ! *Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*¹

¹ Rom. viii. 38, 39.^k Rev. vii. 17.¹ 1 Pet. iv. 19.

DISCOURSE IX.

Abraham offering up Isaac.

GENESIS xxii. 12.

— *Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.*

LET no man say when he is tempted, “ I am tempted of God,” for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man ; but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.^m — It is, indeed, a puzzling question, presumptuous in a weak-sighted creature to decide upon, “ How far an “ express and positive injunction of the “ Almighty might give that action the “ force of a duty, which, exclusive of “ such a command, would be altogether “ unjusti-

^m James i. 13, 14.

“unjustifiable?”—In other words, “How far he who gave the law, has the power of altering or dispensing with it?”—Yet, as the statutes and ordinances of the Lord are founded in equity and the relation of things, it is in general a proper inference, that the All-wise Legislator will not be accessory to a deed, directly contrary to his righteous law; and the event of the history, under present consideration, clearly proves, that by the Lord’s *tempting* Abraham, we ought not to understand, he laid a snare in the patriarch’s way to inveigle him to sin, but *tried* Abraham, for the discovery and exercise, of his faith and constancy.

Abraham was so remarkable an instance of the power of God’s grace, that he is stiled *the father of the faithful*, to intimate that his faith was of strength, vigour and success so abundant, as to be a copy and encouragement for believers, in all future ages. — Faith including a belief of God’s declarations, and a trust in his promises, evidenced by an unreserved obedience to his will, its genuineness cannot be fairly put to the test, but
by

by some trial in its nature afflictive. Uninterrupted prosperity is no more the suitable exercise of trust in God, than the receipt of ready-money only, is the idea of giving credit. God's people, therefore, are partakers of affliction, *that the trial of their faith, being much more precious than of gold, which perisheth though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ ;*ⁿ and perhaps Abraham's trials were of a sort, that touched him as nearly, as any have experienced before or since. — I do not however, exhibit him as a perfect character. To teach us, that there is a mixture of unbelief, in the faith of the most exalted saints in this world, even Abraham is recorded to have twice evasively denied his wife. — Nor is his connection with Hagar to be commended. But in other respects, he is an example hardly if at all paralleled.

Born in Ur of the Chaldees, his kindred were of rank and opulence, in the city where they resided ; but alas ! to
gain

ⁿ 1 Pet. i. 7.

gain respect, they conformed to the idolatry of the place. The sun was conjectured to be the supreme cause of existence; and they worshipped fire, as his truest emblem. — *Get thee out from thy country, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee; and I will make of thee a great nation,* said the Lord to Abraham: *so Abraham departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him* ° *He obeyed and went out,* adds the Apostle, *not knowing whither he went;* ^p but resolved to follow implicitly the divine direction. — The promise of being a great nation was, in itself, as improbable, as it was unexpected. Himself seventy-five, his wife sixty-five years old, the prospect of posterity seemed so incompatible with their period of life, that Sarah could scarcely be grave on the occasion, and her incredulous laughter received a just, though gentle reprimand, from the Angel of the Lord who visited Abraham, with a more ample explanation of the promise. — It was not from the same principle, that *Abraham laughed in his heart,* ^q but a smile of complacency and

° Gen. xii. 1. ^p Heb. xi. 8. ^q Gen. xvii. 17.

and thankfulness, resulting from a confidence in the divine assurances. Scripture affords this unconstrained testimony, that *he staggered not at the promise, through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;*¹ and embracing the promise in its fullest extent — believing in that *seed* which was to spring from him, and by which all nations of the earth were to be blessed, *it was imputed for righteousness,*² and he was declared an heir of that justification, which is received by faith in the Lord our righteousness.

But these were not the least of the trials, he was appointed unto. — Our text relates to a more severe proof, of the genuineness and strength of his belief of what God had spoke; which we are authorized to treat in a *literal*, and *figurative* sense, both conducive to our information, in that temper and conduct, whereby we may become the children of faithful Abraham.

I. Then, the literal story discovers to us Abraham's faith, not eradicating, but
triumphing

¹ Rom. iv. 20.

² Rom. iv. 22.

triumphing over the feelings of parental affection.—In due time, we read, though not till he was an hundred, and his wife ninety, years old, he had a son whom he named Isaac, whom he nursed with tenderness, and who was the darling of his father, the delight of his mother, and the hope of the family. The good old patriarch had the positive assurance, that in Isaac, should his seed be called;— Isaac was now grown up to years of maturity—and the filial piety of the son had touched the father's heart, with those tender and pleasing emotions, that the latter thought only of dying in a good old age, and leaving the world to a successor so hopeful, and of expectations so ample. “ I shall quickly, said he, close
 “ my eyes in death.—My beloved Isaac
 “ will stand by, and perform the last offices at my funeral. — Though I have
 “ not all the comfort I wish for in
 “ Ishmael, yet Isaac will be the staff of
 “ my old age, and a witness for God,
 “ when I am gone to *that city which*
 “ *hath foundations, whose builder and ma-*
 “ *ker*

“*ker is the Lord.*”¹—How rational and well-founded are these reflections!—And what could disturb them, you ask, after the declarations he had received from the lip of infinite truth? You shall hear.—The Lord called, *Abraham!*—Obedient to the heavenly vision, he immediately replied, “*Here am I.*—Think not, said the Lord, “that thy trials are ended:—One yet “remains.—*Take now thy son, thine only “son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get “thee into the land of Moriah; and offer “him there for a burnt-offering, upon one “of the mountains which I will tell thee “of.*”——Let us ask, How would unbelief, if predominant in Abraham, have reasoned concerning this strange command? “Hath the promise failed at “last? Are all my dreams of happiness “at an end? Was Isaac born only to “die? Did the bud shoot forth its “blossoms, only to be blasted? Did the “flower display its beauty, for no other “purpose than that it might be plucked?—Must my *son* die—my *only son* “who remains with me, and whom alone
“I can

¹ Heb. xi. 10.

“ I can look upon, as my successor and
 “ heir — my son *whom I love*, and who,
 “ added to the affection a parent, has
 “ so many engaging qualities, that render
 “ him amiable in my eyes? Ah! Why
 “ was he promised at all? Why did he
 “ not die as soon as born, and before I
 “ knew his value? Why was he suf-
 “ fered to grow up, and entwine around
 “ my heart, only that I might feel the
 “ pain of a separation from him? Would
 “ it not have been wiser that I should
 “ die rather than Isaac? I am old and
 “ grey-headed, and wish to have done
 “ with the world, and must I survive a
 “ young man, who is ripening for use-
 “ fulness? — But he must die, and I,
 “ also, must be his executioner. If his
 “ death alone will satisfy the decree of
 “ heaven, could not the Almighty have
 “ taken him away, without putting me
 “ to the dreadful task, of embruing my
 “ hands in his blood? Yet the command
 “ reaches still further — even to kill him
 “ — mangle his body — and burn him to
 “ ashes. — Can it be? — Could a Being
 “ of infinite love issue such an injunc-
 “ tion?

"tion? Could he enjoin, that a father
 "should be necessary to the death of
 "his son? Doth it not contradict his
 "own prohibition, of shedding wantonly
 "the blood of men? And does it not
 "contradict also, his own express pro-
 "mise, that, through Isaac, I shall be a
 "*father of many nations.*" It surely can-
 "not be the voice of God. Either my
 "senses deceive me, or I am imposed
 "on. — It must be an illusion of my
 "fancy, or Satan *hath*, like he did to
 "Eve, *transformed himself into an angel of*
 "*light,*" to induce me to murder Isaac,
 "and defeat God's promise concerning
 "him." — Had Abraham argued in this
 strain, his objections would have been
 similar to, and (to say the least) as rati-
 onal, as any of the cavils thrown out in
 these days, against the revealed will of
 God. — "That Balak king of Moab
 "proposed, to offer the fruit of his body
 "for the sin of his soul,* is not impro-
 "bable, or strange to persons conversant
 "with the history of the heathen nations.
 "They formed deities, the creatures of
 "their

* Gen. xvii. 5. w 2 Cor. xi. 14. x Mic. vi. 7.

“ their own imaginations, and endowed
 “ them with the same cruel tempers,
 “ themselves possessed:—But that the true
 “ God, the beneficent Author of nature,
 “ should countenance human-sacrifices, is
 “ scarcely reconcileable with the idea we
 “ are taught to form of his attributes,
 “ and of a revelation which has proceeded
 “ from him.” — So runs an objection to
 this history, drawn up by the very men,
 who declaim so largely, about the sufficiency
 of natural-religion (in modern language of *pure deism*) to lead to duty and
 felicity. And I wish the patrons of infidelity,
 were exclusively the disputants, *who reply against God.*^y—But the voice,
 and manner of address were so familiar
 to Abraham, that he did not entertain a
 doubt of the speaker; and he well knew,
 his duty was not to reason, but obey.—
Accounting that God was able to raise up
Isaac, even from the dead,^z and would perform
 a miracle, rather than falsify his
 own word, in token of the readiness of
 his obedience, Abraham *rose up early in*
the morning, deliberately cleaved the wood
for

^y Rom. ix. 20. ^z Heb. xi. 19.

for the burnt-offering, saddled his ass, and, without acquainting them with his design, took Isaac his son, and two servants, and proceeded towards the spot destined for the solemnity.

It is in the nature of a certain warmth, often found assuming the garb of religion, that though suddenly excited, and exceeding violent for a season, in time it dies away, perhaps leaves the possessor more lukewarm, than he was before the flame was kindled.—If Abraham's zeal had been of this sort, there was sufficient opportunity for his reflections to have cooled it.—Moriah being forty miles, or, slowly as they travelled, three day's journey from Beersheba, the place of the patriarch's stated residence, we cannot tell what conflicts he had, with his own heart and with temptation, in the interval of this journey. — Were we to describe him as unassaulted by either, we should represent a sinless character, not a man of like infirmities with the rest of God's people; and his faith, having nothing of an opposite principle to combat with, would not operate as an example,
or

or be for the encouragement of an humble soul, whose confession and prayer is, *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.*^a—Is it then unnatural—is it inconsistent with humanity, to suppose the sigh ready to heave—the tear ready to start, upon the sight of Isaac, upon the assiduity with which the latter attended his aged father at his meals, and provided suitable accommodations, in the close of the day, and a recollection of the errand on which they were going?—But yet, faith remained gloriously victorious;—it suppressed distrustful, rebellious thoughts, and determined the good man, to fulfil the self-denying duty God had enjoined.—Beholding the hill where the sacrifice was to be offered, he left the servants at a distance (probably, lest they should interfere, and frustrate his intention) he laid the wood upon Isaac, and advanced to the scene of action. Here, could any thing have turned him from his purpose, the artless and unsuspecting address of Isaac, at this instant, would have effected it. “*My father, permit the enquiry.*”

^a Mat. ix. 24.

“ quiry. *Behold the fire and the wood ;*
 “ *but where is the lamb for a burnt-*
 “ *offering ?*” — This was an unexpected
 stroke ; a shock that would have con-
 founded, and overfet the hardiest resolu-
 tion of many a hero. But Abraham’s
 faith was ftill fuperior. “ *My fon,* faid
 “ *he meekly, ceafe thy enquiries. God*
 “ *will provide himfelf a lamb, for a burnt-*
 “ *offering.—So they went both together.*”—

In the conclufion of the ftory, we are at
 a lofs which to admire moft, the intre-
 pidity of the father, or the lamb-like
 fubmiffion of the fon. Short of the ac-
 tual facrifice of Ifaac, there is but one
 circumftance, to heighten the picture of
 Abraham’s trial. He deliberately built
 an altar—laid the wood—and bound his
 fon, who, though he might eafily have
 overcome the efforts of a feeble old man,
 refigned himfelf without murmuring—re-
 fifted not, even when ftretched upon the
 altar, and his father’s hand grasped the
 deadly weapon, to put a period to his
 life. *And Abraham ftretched forth his hand,*
faith the facred hiftorian, and took the
knife that was to flay his fon.—You are

L

waiting

waiting to hear, that the fatal thrust was given, as hitherto there occurs nothing to prevent it.—But Abraham's fidelity was now put to the severest proof.—The Angel of the Lord hovered watchfully over him, during the whole transaction.—And, in the moment of greatest extremity, interrupted him hastily, by the well-known salutation, "*Abraham! Abraham!*"—Twice is the name repeated, to engage his immediate notice, to draw off his mind from proceeding, to denote the seeming anxiety of the Angel, lest the arm of Abraham should add a single exertion, more than was necessary. *And he said*, in our text, *Lay not thine hand upon the lad, for now thou hast clearly manifested, and I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.*—Thus was Isaac spared.—That the preparations for the sacrifice, however, might not be in vain, a ram, providentially directed thither, was offered up by Abraham *instead of his son.* And him whom a little before we thought, devoted by the Lord, and resigned by his own father, to an untimely end, we behold

hold restored as alive from the dead, with additional promises of blessing, of being the parent of a race, numerous as the stars of heaven, or the sands upon the sea-shore, and who should possess the gate of their enemies, in token of their victory over all opposition.—So signal and marvellous was this interposition of providence, and so full of meaning he now saw the whole transaction to be, that, from the piety and thankfulness of his heart, Abraham *called the name of the place, Jehovah Jireh* (literally, *the Lord shall be seen*) and he leads us to enquire, What may be collected from the literal story, for our instruction and improvement?—Do we not learn, that from the incomprehensible Jehovah, those incomprehensible proceedings may be expected, which our narrow conceptions are not able to reconcile wholly to our own feelings and notions of things? No command, apparently, more flatly contradicted the fundamental principles of morality, than that given to Abraham.—Clouds and darkness do, frequently, so surround God's throne, that impenetrable are his dealings in this

world, with the righteous and the wicked. — Is it strange, then, that the word he has spoke contains truths inscrutable by us; or that *the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ,*^b so dazzles our present weak perceptions, as to render us incapable of examining it distinctly, tracing it to its origin, and discerning all its beauty? — But what does duty teach in this case? *See'st thou how Abraham's faith wrought with his works, and by his works was faith*^c *made perfect,* that is, rendered completely conqueror. Let his example prevail on us, in our difficulties of every kind, to be *dumb and not open our mouth,*^d against what God speaks, or does. If Abraham implicitly obeyed, without enquiring the motive of the divine command, nearly as he was interested in it, and if he obtained from above, so ample an attestation to that fear of God, which influenced his obedience, we are taught hence the impropriety, of mixing our own imperfect reasonings with the doctrines of God's word, and perplexing ourselves with fruitless investi-

^b 2 Cor. iv. 6. ^c James ii. 22. ^d Psalm xxxix. 9.

investigations, into his mysterious nature and secret counsels.—I do not ask, What is this or that good man's creed? What are the distinguishing tenets, of this or that party or denomination?—But, are such particular truths revealed in the Bible?—That is the province of reason to explore.—But rest there. Reason is a rebel against heaven, if she proceeds further.—Say not “How can these things be?”—Say not, I am unable to reconcile them, to my ideas of God?” Suppose you are.—What then? It will not prove, that they are inconsistent with his perfections, unless your ideas can comprehend the whole of his plan, and fathom his immensity. We are obliged in natural, and why may we not in spiritual intricacies, safely take many things for granted; and, as the children of faithful Abraham, act obediently upon the belief, that *what we know not now, we shall know hereafter?*^c Does not religion—does not modesty—does not our own satisfaction suggest it? *Shall the thing formed, say to him that formed it, Why hast*

L 3

thou

^c John xiii. 7.

thou made me thus?^f What effect has this over-inquisitive temper ever had, but to puzzle and mislead the mind, to entangle it in the wiles of scepticism, and leave it there; at the same time that the sceptic is still obliged, to receive a thousand principles upon trust, to support him from sinking into atheism — from sinking into a state of universal doubt, painful suspense, and anxiety intolerable, the most wretched of all human beings. — Will the foregoing reasoning point out the duty of God's people, in a season of affliction? It will. — Providence threatens, possibly, a removal of your comforts, or God has actually laid his hand upon you — laid it, to your sensations, heavily. Yet *be still, and know that he is God.*^g He cannot act amiss, inconsistent with his wisdom, his faithfulness, or his love. Resign yourself to him; and, while you attend to what is immediately and obviously enjoined, let the Lord lead, and you cannot eventually be wrong. From Abraham's case, we learn, that God may permit his children, to be in the
very

^f Rom. ix. 20.^g Psalm xlv. 10.

very depth of trial, to manifest his strength in their weakness, the suitableness of his deliverance, by the bulk of their extremity. Who can say, but when distress approaches, with hand uplifted, ready to pierce your soul with many sorrows, the voice of God may that instant countermand it, and send salvation? As you have scriptural ground for this hope, so to cast your burthen upon the Lord, is the way to have your comforts restored with a blessing (as Isaac was restored to Abraham, with a repetition of the promises made concerning him) or if taken away, their deficiency supplied by greater mercies; or that inward peace and consolation, which will more than out-balance their removal. *Wait on the Lord, then; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart, wait I say on the Lord.*^h — But

II. There are several circumstances in the story, which intimate, that it has also a figurative or spiritual meaning. — The Apostle Paul extolling the faith of Abra-

L 4

ham,

^h Psalm xxvii. 14.

ham, as here referred to, tells us, that Isaac being thus in intention offered up to death, *was received from thence in a figure,*ⁱ which it would be putting a comparatively empty and low interpretation upon, to confine it to Isaac, and assert that it had no further signification, than the representation of a burial and resurrection. A type or figure points to some object more substantial, of which it is the shadow or resemblance. Is it, then, unnatural, to consider the offering up of Isaac, as prefigurative of the more glorious offering of the Son of God? Our Lord declared to the Jews, *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day*—believing the promises of the Messiah, his heart exulted, and leaped forward with desire, to anticipate the grand event; to receive not some distant and broken hints, but a particular token, whereby he might distinguish its manner; *and he saw it and was glad.*^k When did he see it? What circumstance of his life, could so amply unfold it to him, as the command to sacrifice his son Isaac?—Isaac was

ⁱ Heb. xi. 19.^k John viii. 56.

was, in a sense, Abraham's *only son*, and Christ, in a higher sense, *the only begotten son of God*.¹—Isaac was Abraham's son, *whom he loved*, and Jesus God's *beloved son, in whom he is well pleased*.^m—

Abraham, notwithstanding his affection for Isaac, readily yielded him up to the divine requisition, and God *spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all*.ⁿ

—May not the three days journey to Moriah, also, direct to the three years of Christ's ministry, previous to his last sufferings?—And is it not worthy of notice, that as Isaac carried the wood, intended to sacrifice him, so Christ carried the cross on which he was crucified?—Isaac, though young and able to resist, yet resigned himself to his father's will; so Christ *had power to lay down his life, and power to take it up again*;^o he was not forced into the contest with death and hell, but entered into it willingly.—If there is this difference between the two cases, that Isaac was saved from actual death, by the preventing voice of God,

L 5

and

¹ John i. 14.

^m Mat. xvii. 5.

ⁿ Rom. viii. 32.

^o John x. 18.

and a ram substituted in his place, Jesus, also, was raised from the dead, having *burst the bands of the grave, because it was not possible he could be holden of it,*^p and thereby proclaimed himself the Son of God with power.—And as the resignation of Isaac was the ground of a promise, of a numerous and prosperous seed, to spring from him, so as the fruit of the death of Jesus, it is a promise now fulfilling in the world, that *he shall see his seed,—see sinners born again, converted from sin to God, by the power of his cross, and grace of his spirit, and brought to heaven through all opposition; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands.*^q—To strengthen all which, may be added a remark on the place appointed for the offering of Isaac. Abraham was not left, arbitrarily, to chuse the spot, but directed to the land of Moriah, and there to a particular hill, afterwards to be made known. Some ages after this event, the city of Zion enclosed, and the temple of Solomon was built upon one of the hills
of

^p Acts ii. 24.^q Isa. liii. 10.

of Moriah. But it is observable, that of the mountains in this division of Canaan, there was another higher than that, whereon the temple was erected, and which, as being the loftiest, and nearest to Abraham in this journey, it is reasonable to believe struck his eye first, and he is related to have *lifted up his eyes, and seen afar off*, as the hill destined for the offering of Isaac. When Zion was built this hill was situated without the gates, and was the place where criminals were usually executed, from whence, or from the likeness of its shape to a man's head, it obtained the name of Golgotha, or Calvary, *the place of a skull*,^{*} and was the identical hill on which our blessed Lord suffered.—Compare the whole and say, if the offering of Isaac was not a designed representation, of the more excellent sacrifice of the Son of God. — It is not without probability, therefore, ingenious writers have conjectured, that in the name Jehovah Jireh, Abraham with joy professed his firm belief, that *the Lord would*, in like manner,

L 6

be
^{*} Mat. xxvii. 33.

*be seen** on that very mount. — With what satisfaction, and sweet composure of mind, did the venerable Patriarch return to his servants and his dwelling, possessed of so ample a testimony, to the reality of his faith, and having had before his eyes, so apt and affecting a picture of the process of the christian redemption! — What think ye then of Christ? — Does not the joy of Abraham, on this occasion, remind you, christians, of the refined pleasure you have experienced, in some happy seasons, when relieved from doubts and tears, or particularly favoured with divine communications, either in prayer, or hearing God's word, or at the table of the Lord, *you had*, as it were, *Christ evidently crucified before your eyes*,† and so precious did he appear, that you *rejoiced in him, with joy unspeakable and full of glory*?‡ — Does not the joy of Abraham in this, after all, imperfect view of Christ, reproach the indifference of multitudes, who behold the christian redemption accomplished, and yet make light of it?

Will

* Divine Legation of Moses, Vol 4. † Gal iii. 1.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 8.

Dis. 9. *Abraham offering up Isaac.* 229

Will not his earnestness to understand its spiritual meaning, rise up in the judgment to condemn those, who rest in the empty notion, or are contented with the bare profession of this truth?—O that the spirit of God may rest upon us, that we *may be able to comprehend in the measure the saints do, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height of the love of Christ;*^w that belonging to him, we may be *Abraham's spiritual seed, heirs according to the promise, and, in time and eternity, may be blessed with faithful Abraham.*^x Amen!

^w Eph. iii. 18.

^x Gal. iii. 9, 29.

H Y M N.

ABRA'M, the saint, rejoic'd of old,
When visions of the Lord he saw,
Moses, the man of God, foretold
This great fulfiller of his law.
Predictions in abundance meet,
To join their blessings on his head.
Jesus, we worship at thy feet,
And nations own the promis'd seed.

D I S.

DISCOURSE X.

Jacob's hasty conclusion.

GENESIS xlii. 36.

—*All these things are against me.*

PERUSING the histories of eminent saints in the sacred writings, we are struck with the magnitude of their attainments, and lustre of their conduct; which, whilst a wish is excited in us, that we could better imitate examples so noble, raises also a sigh in many an humble heart, from a comparison of the strength of grace in the former, with its apparent feebleness in themselves.—When we read of the faith, the obedience, and resignation of Abraham—the piety and translation of Enoch and Elijah—the patience of Job—the meekness of Moses, his contempt of the world's grandeur, and
intimate

intimate acquaintance with God—the resolution of Paul, and the revelations made to him of the third heaven, we are ready to think them creatures of another make; at least, that their graces were so superior, that what we possess sinks into a mere shadow. But when we review the whole of their characters, and perceive, that they had their doubts and fears, their corruptions and infirmities, their unbelieving moments and unguarded expressions——when we recollect that, in particular instances, Abraham's courage failed him, that Job cursed his day, that Elijah fretfully wished to die, that the sin of Moses prevented his entrance on the earthly Canaan, that Paul, *lest he should be exalted above measure, had a thorn in his flesh, given unto him,*^y and experienced many a painful conflict with the body of sin,^z we are induced to think, they were men of similar tempers, and debtors to the same grace, that we are.—God who carried them, will also sustain us through our variety of trials
—and

^y 2 Cor. xii. 7.

^z Rom. vii.

—and though we *believe* but weakly, yet *he is faithful, he cannot deny himself.*^a

The like encouragement the mind draws, from our text, which was spoken by the patriarch Jacob, upon an occasion, that touched the feelings of his heart very keenly. *All these things are against me*, he says. The sequel of his history, however, will convince us his apprehensions were groundless, and lead to this general instruction: “That particular parts
“ of the divine dispensations have seem-
“ ed to be against God’s people, when
“ they have actually been making for
“ their benefit.”—In enlarging on which I shall attempt,

I. To prove the point.

II. Shew whence good people, in affliction, deduce this unfavourable conclusion. And

III. Propose to consideration, the scriptural defence against it.—I am

I. To prove, that many things have been apparently against God’s people, when they have actually been making
for

^a 2 Tim. ii. 13.

for their benefit.—That *all things work together for good to them that love God*, so evidencing that they are the called according to his purpose,^b the Bible uniformly testifies; nor is there the smallest exception to the remark; but as assertions, unsupported by experimental proof, fall short of affording relief, in the tedious hours of distress, let us enquire, whether facts, also, preach the same doctrine? And here,

1. If we consult the sacred history, we shall find this fact beautifully illustrated.—There are two anecdotes, in the life of the patriarch Jacob, directly to the purpose. Driven from his father's house, by the malice of his brother Esau, he seemed an helpless outcast, without any probability of being the man of opulence, we afterwards behold him; yet this very circumstance, was the means appointed by providence, of raising him to that degree of affluence. Even the attempts of Laban, first to impose upon and then to injure him, had through the divine influence the contrary effect, to enrich and

^b Rom. viii. 28.

and make him prosperous ; so that tho' *with his staff alone he passed Jordan*, in his departure from his father's dwelling, in his return, he was *become* the head of a numerous company, consisting of *two bands*.^c—Behold him, also, in the deep and piercing affliction, to which our text refers. He had lost his best-beloved son Joseph—the son of Rachel, whom he had so passionately regarded, and for whose death he was at this time a mourner. The youth bore, possibly, the image of his mother. More than that, he was good as well as beautiful. The father had been often grieved, with the violence and obstinacy of his other sons ; but fondly expected Joseph to be the prop of his age.—But Joseph was taken away.—His father sent him out, one day, to enquire after the welfare of his brethren—and he saw him no more. The young man's coat only was found, rent and stained with blood. “ An evil beast hath devoured him, said Jacob ; I will “ go down mourning to my grave.”——But, as if this stroke was not enough, the

^c Gen. xxxii. 10.

the story relates an additional affliction which befel him. A grievous famine raged throughout the land wherein he dwelt. Egypt was the only place, whence corn could be procured. Ten of his sons went down, to buy food, leaving their youngest brother at home, with his father. But the governor of Egypt (hospitable in his nature — compassionate and generous especially to strangers) behaved towards them, with a reserve unusual to him. He even suspected and confined them as spies. And though prevailed upon at length, with great submission and many entreaties, to let nine depart home, he bound Simeon before their faces, and threatened them with a denial of provision, and the loss of their brother, if they did not produce to him their youngest brother, the youngest son of Rachel, whom they had in their confusion spoken of, and so tear from their father, the remaining darling of his heart. — It was upon this occasion, the good man exclaimed, *Me have ye bereaved of my children : Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away ; all these things are*
against

against me. Nevertheless we see, in the event, that all things were, that instant, working for Jacob's comfort. The governor of Egypt was his beloved son Joseph. The confinement of Simeon was to lead him to a reflection, on his former cruelty. The demand of Benjamin proceeded from Joseph's anxiety, to behold one he loved so much, and a desire of putting to proof, whether his other brethren loved or hated him. Being thus far satisfied, by several trials of his brethren's affection in their manner severe, Joseph discovered himself—Simeon was released—loaded with presents, the eleven returned to Canaan—Jacob saw again the face of his amiable son, whose supposed death he had so long lamented—and Joseph closed the dying eyes, of his aged and reverend parent.

The history of Joseph's distresses, and advancement to the dignity of Viceroy of Egypt, speaks to the same purpose. He had dreamed twice to this effect, that his father and brethren should bow down to him; and mere dreams they seemed to be, when, the envy of his brethren stirred
up

up thereby, they were hardly withheld from slaying him. What little probability was there, of his ever receiving homage from his brethren, when he was stripped by them of his raiment, and cast into a deep pit ! Nor was there much greater, when they sold him as a slave to certain Midianites, who, mercenary by their profession, would not seek the tenderest master ; but how they might dispose of him, the most to their own emolument. — Indeed, when the Midianites sold him into Egypt, and Potiphar his master treated him so kindly, and put such deserved confidence in him, a considerate spectator would have thought, “ So faithful a servant, with the countenance of so rich and generous a master, cannot fail of preferment.” But how suddenly were his affairs beclouded, when, first of all, he was beloved by his mistress, and, then, because his duty to God, and fidelity to his lord restrained him from this unlawful amour, he was accused by this wicked woman, of attempting the crime he refused, and, as a criminal, cast into prison ! The eye of justice,

tice, with indignation, reads the tale. — The tear of sympathy drops at the rehearsal — And the heart of unbelief is, from its own dimness, ready to ask, “Is there a God that judgeth in the earth?” — Yes, there is. — The sufferings of Joseph, to be sure, were great. Several years he lay in this confinement, as if forgotten. His feet were hurt with fetters, and the iron entered into his soul. But when the word of the Lord came to release him, his sufferings were discovered to be the direct road to his advancement. Pharaoh’s butler and baker being cast into prison, Joseph waited on them. Each had a dream, which Joseph interpreted exactly, to the enlargement of the one, and ruin of the other. King Pharaoh also dreamed, and the interpreter among a thousand not to be found, the butler recollected the gift Joseph was endowed with. The king’s dreams explained, and the grievous famine predicted, immediately it occurred, that there was none so likely, to prevent the fatal effects of the impending scarcity, as he who had with so much wisdom foretold it.

it. Joseph, therefore, was pitched upon, as the governor of the land; Pharaoh *made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance; to bind his princes, at his pleasure, and teach his senators wisdom.*^d

How deep, how hard to be traced, are the footsteps of Providence! — The farther we read, the stronger will be the confirmation of this sentiment. Israel was brought into Egypt, to be nourished and supported. But the prosperity of this world hath its ebbings, proportionably to its flowings. In a course of years, the people whom Egypt regarded with respect and gratitude, as the kinsmen of Joseph their deliverer, were looked upon with the eye of envy, and treated as enemies. Joseph was dead; and another Pharaoh had, also, arisen, who did not recollect, or who undervalued his services. As Israel encreased, Egypt grew jealous. Unfavourable suspicions introduced servitude; and turned the land of Goshen into an house of bondage. Which scheme not succeeding to depress Israel, another, yet more diabolical, was contrived, even
to

^d Psalm cv. 21, 22.

to destroy all their male children, that, in time, the race of Abraham might be extinct. The project was of so infernal a nature, that Pharaoh himself blushed, at first, to make it public. But when the Hebrew midwives would not be tampered with, or consent to his inhuman measures, *Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, "The king doth strictly command, "that Every son, born of the Hebrews, "ye shall cast into the river."*^c—Set before your eyes, then, the sly informer, lurking near the habitation of the oppressed, to watch the hour of travail, and give notice of the birth of a child. Think of the anguish, which wrings the parents hearts, when they perceive that a man-child is born into the world. Figure to yourselves, the ruffian of an executioner, or barbarous soldier, furiously demanding entrance, and mercilessly snatching away the helpless, smiling-infant, to cast it into the Nile. Mark the father, outrageously rushing forward, to rescue his son; but he is with-held by force, or perishes under the hands, of the authorized murderer of his
his

^c Exodus i. 22.

his offspring. Hear the lamentations of the mother ; Rachel weepeth for her child, and refuseth to be comforted, because he is not. — God only knows, how many thousands thus left the stage of life, as soon as they entered upon it. But they found that mercy in heaven, which in Egypt they were denied. — After so bloody a decree, so remorselessly executed, what hope can we entertain of the freedom of Israel ; or from what quarter expect their deliverance to arise ? — From the decree itself, came the saviour to the house of Jacob. — Moses was born, and his parents, through faith, hid him three months, though at the same time, they disobeyed the command of the king, and, perhaps, endangered their own lives, if the fact were known. When they could conceal him no longer, his mother enclosed him in a basket made of bulrushes ; (or *papyrus*, a kind of smooth flag, very proper for this purpose) and, committing him to providence, placed him by the river's side. At that instant came the daughter of Pharaoh, with her maids, to bathe. Pleased with the beauty

M

of

of the babe, and moved by the eloquence of his infant moans, she resolved to nurse him as her own. Moses, accordingly, was educated in all the wisdom of Egypt, and renowned as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, possibly, the presumed heir of the throne—more than which, Moses is celebrated in the sacred pages, as the friend of God, the redeemer and leader of his people out of the land of Egypt, and the honoured instrument, of communicating his will to Israel.

When, farther, Israel was led out of Egypt, to the borders of the Red-sea, their prospect was as gloomy as can be well imagined. After many judgments inflicted upon Pharaoh and his subjects, in a panic, occasioned by the death of the first-born in every family, they drove Israel out; but the welcome mandate was hardly issued, before the king's hardness of heart returned, and unwilling to lose so many slaves, he determined to force them back. Hemmed in by Pharaoh's army, on the one hand, and the Red-sea, on the other, the people tauntingly murmured against Moses, “ All these things
“ are

“ are against us. *Because there were no*
 “ *graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us*
 “ *away to die in the wilderness?*”—Moses
 was persuaded God would appear, but
 he could not discern, from what quarter
 the salvation was to arise. “ *Stand still,*
 “ *says he, and see the salvation of God,*”
 — advice evidently meant to gain time,
 for prayer. But “ *Wherefore criest thou*
 “ *unto me?* returned the Lord; *speak*
 “ *unto the children of Israel, that they go*
 “ *forward.*”^f They did so; and that
 obstacle to their progress, which, the mo-
 ment before, was impassable, God made
 the means of separating them from Egypt,
 and of destroying their enemies. *With*
the blasts of his nostrils the waters were
gathered together; the floods stood upright
as an heap, and the depths were congealed
in the heart of the sea, so that the children
of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst
of the sea,^g *and the waters were a wall*
unto them on their right hand, and on their
left, through which cavity, Pharaoh and
his host pursuing, the flood returned upon
them, they sank as lead in the great

M 2
deep,

^f Exodus xiv. 13, 14.

^g Exodus xv. 8.

deep, and Israel looked next morning, and saw the Egyptians dead, upon the sea-shore.

The history of David will furnish us with a like example. Born and educated in private life, and the youngest of his father's sons, the Lord commissioned Samuel to anoint him king, in preference to his elder brethren, and to Saul the reigning prince, who had forsaken God, and was forsaken by him. The first appearance of David at court, and especially his victory over Goliath the gigantic Philistine, and his marriage to Saul's daughter, gave room for expectation, that he would be a man of great power and reputation in the land; but still the sons and grandsons of Saul were obstacles, humanly speaking, unsurmountable in his way to the throne. And his case seemed little less than desperate, when, through the ill-founded jealousy of Saul, he was declared an out-law, and a price set upon his head, when he was hunted from mountain to mountain, and even driven for refuge, to the enemies of his God and country. *I shall now perish one day,*
said

said he, *by the hand of Saul.*ⁿ Yet the very hardships of David were over-ruled by providence, to be the means of fixing him upon the throne. For by his good behaviour and usefulness, in different parts of the nation, his forbearance to revenge himself upon Saul, when in his power — his defence of the property of individuals, while encamped near them — and the vengeance he returned upon the Philistines and Amalekites, who had laid waste a part of Israel — by these and other actions, he so ingratiated himself with the people, that upon the death of Saul, and a failure of issue in that line, he was unanimously chosen their sovereign, and reigned with bright, though not unfulfilled glory.

To pass over much of the Jewish history, let us recite two or three facts, near its conclusion. In what way, were Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego confirmed in the appointments made them, and their religion honoured in the presence of king Nebuchadnezzar? In that way which, at first sight, tended most

M 3 to

ⁿ 1 Samuel xxvii. 1.

to the dishonour and destruction of both. Nebuchadnezzar set up a golden image, and commanded all his vassals to worship it. These holy men dared to disobey. They chose, rather, to risque their lives, or embrace certain death, than renounce the acknowledgment, of the alone true God. They were, therefore, cast, without pity, into a furnace, burning for their reception with a seven-fold vehemence. Yet the Lord miraculously preserved them in the fire; and thereby convinced the king, that *there is no other God, that can deliver after this sort.*ⁱ—

In what way was Daniel, already dear to Darius the Mede, preferred to the still greater respect and countenance of that monarch? By the crafty counsel of his enemies, who caused him to be cast into the lions' den, for paying his daily adorations to the Most High. God was with him there—the mouths of the lions were shut—and Daniel raised up, from his confinement, unhurt.^k—Once more: In what way was the kingdom of Jesus promoted, and the grand intention of his mission

ⁱ Daniel iii. 29.^k Daniel vi. 22.

mission into the world succeeded? By the contrivances to abolish it — by the death of the Son of God. — With wicked hands, he was crucified and slain. His bitter persecutors exulted in his fall, and his followers almost gave up the hope, that he would redeem Israel. But *through death he destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.*¹ — Through death he opened a way, for the restoration of sinners — by his resurrection he confirmed, both the truth of his mission, and the all-sufficiency of his sacrifice — and by his gospel and Spirit, he has *destroyed the works of Satan*,^m extended his own dominion over the world, and reduced his adversaries to the obedience of his cross. — So does the sacred history confirm the doctrine, that those dispensations, which carry the most adverse countenance, may be working for the advantage of those, who are exercised thereby. And,

2. Has not our own experience of the ways of God had the same voice? —

When, for instance, christians, God con-

M 4 vinced.

¹ Heb. ii. 14.

^m 1 John iii. 8.

vinced you, of the evil of your former ways, and from a state of sinful security, awakened you to discern his anger, your own iniquities, and, of course, the danger you were in. Your hearts felt the terrors of the Lord. You were overwhelmed in sorrow. You trembled, as upon the brink of destruction, and went mourning all the day long. You thought God's hand was against you; and viewed yourself as the mark, for his justice to aim at. But how differently did you judge of the divine procedure, when your sorrow was turned into joy—when you were led to Christ for comfort and salvation—when you viewed the standard of the gospel lifted up, as a refuge for lost sinners, and Jesus *as able to save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him*ⁿ—when, instead of being condemned, you *passed from death unto life*^o—and, in place of walking in the road of sin, you became a converted person, had your fruit unto holiness, and ran in the way everlasting! You confess now, that in mercy God met with you, and from love awakened you, that

ⁿ Heb. vii. 25.^o John v. 24.

that you might be numbered amongst his saints, and inherit the portion of his children.

Again : You have been harassed also by your inward foes — have *known every one the plague of his own heart,*^p and groaned under the body of death. — Satan hath been permitted to tempt you, as he did your Lord. Your spirits have been depressed with grief, and ready to bode, that you should never be victorious over enemies so formidable, so numerous. Often have you expressed your apprehensions, “ I shall, in some unhappy moment, fall away, dishonour God, and perish.” But God’s mercy held you up, and made your struggles with temptation, the means of your spiritual benefit. They taught you to be watchful, and *keep your heart with all diligence.*^q They taught you to be humble, and earnest in prayer. They discovered to you your innate feebleness, and caused you to adhere more closely to the grace that is in Christ Jesus. They established you more in the experience of God’s goodness,

M 5

ness,

^p 1 Kings viii. 38.

^q Prov. iv. 23.

vinced you, of the evil of your former ways, and from a state of sinful security, awakened you to discern his anger, your own iniquities, and, of course, the danger you were in. Your hearts felt the terrors of the Lord. You were overwhelmed in sorrow. You trembled, as upon the brink of destruction, and went mourning all the day long. You thought God's hand was against you; and viewed yourself as the mark, for his justice to aim at. But how differently did you judge of the divine procedure, when your sorrow was turned into joy — when you were led to Christ for comfort and salvation — when you viewed the standard of the gospel lifted up, as a refuge for lost sinners, and Jesus *as able to save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him*ⁿ — when, instead of being condemned, you *passed from death unto life*^o — and, in place of walking in the road of sin, you became a converted person, had your fruit unto holiness, and ran in the way everlasting! You confess now, that in mercy God met with you, and from love awakened you,
that

ⁿ Heb. vii. 25.^o John v. 24.

ness, and the belief of his faithfulness to his covenant and promises. They excited your gratitude to him for past, and trust in him for future deliverances; so that *out of weakness you were made strong** — *strong in the Lord, and the power of his might.**

Affliction, moreover, has overtaken you, in common with other saints, and, perhaps, peculiar trials, which you have been ready to think severe, as if the Lord was turned to be your adversary; or, indeed, never was otherwise. This or that trial, you feared was a token of wrath, not a paternal correction. It was a burden you were scarce able to bear, and possibly, succeeded by heavier distresses. You met with nothing but vexation and disappointment. The schemes you formed for relief, ended in confusion, and the affliction was protracted, almost to your despair.—How wonderfully, notwithstanding, did God support you, though invisibly! How wonderfully has he pointed out, the method of your relief! *Thou broughtest us into the net*, said the Psalmist, *thou*

* Heb. xi. 34.

* Eph. vi. 10.

thou laideſt affliction upon our loins; thou haſt cauſed men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; but, he adds, *thou broughteſt us out into a wealthy place.*[†] — Poverty quickened your invention, and roused you to a cloſer attention to buſineſs. Or rather, the intricacy of your circumſtances ſent you to the fountain of wiſdom, by whoſe unerring guidance you emerged out of your difficulties, and, it may be, equalled, if not ſurpaſſed your former proſperity, with this additional conſideration, that now you underſtood better the value of your mercies. The undiverted current of worldly good, not only palls upon the appetite, and introduces languor and fatiety, but is in its own nature leſs pleaſant, than a life in which the bitter and ſweet are intermingled. It is the hungry, not the pampered man, who has a true reſiſh for his food; the laborious, not the indolent, who taſtes the agreeableneſs of reſt. — And more eſpecially have your diſtreſſes been made ſerviceable, if ſanctified for affording you ſpiritual inſtruction

M 6 —humbling

[†] Pfalm lxvi. 12.

—humbling you under the mighty hand of God, that in due time, he might lift you up—teaching you submission to the Lord's will—weaning you from earth, and sensible things, by convincing you of the world's emptiness and unsatisfying nature—fixing your desires on God, your alone, your all-sufficient rest—and, of course, training you up for the blessed society of heaven. Out of the eater came forth meat.—— Affliction, in itself an evil, produced the most salutary effects. It was *good for you, that you had been afflicted, that you might learn God's statutes.* ^u

3. The church of God, also, in many ditmal situations, has experienced the kind interposition of its sovereign and head. Its state low—its numbers few—religion generally neglected—*Zion by no man sought after* ^w—ministers disheartened—professors backsliding—the truth persecuted—the proud waters approaching to overwhelm it—and many weapons forged for its destruction, its ruin was looked upon as inevitable.—— But still
Jesus

^u Psalm cxix. 71

^w Jeremiah xxx. 17.

Jesus reigns in Zion; and has, frequently, converted the most unpromising events into the means of its prosperity. The church was brought low, to stir up the members to distinguish themselves in prayer for its revival, and to make its consequent encrease the more acceptable, and the more manifestly a ground of thankfulness. The backslidings of those who pretended to religion, have, perhaps, purged out the old leaven, and tried the graces of those that remained; as upon the departure of certain of our Lord's disciples, offended at the spirituality of his doctrine, he put a most moving question to the rest, *Will ye also go away?* and thereby extorted that noble confession of Peter, *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the son of the living God.** Yea, God has made the broaching of error, the means of farther elucidating the truth, and the fury of persecution the opportunity, for him to exert his Almighty arm in defence of his own cause. He has
made

* John vi. 68, 69.

made the blood of the martyrs the seed, from whence a large encreate has arisen, to his glory; and by the very designs, which were aimed at the subversion of true religion, and the meekness of its confessors in their sufferings, diffused his gospel in the world, and convinced sinners of its reality, its excellence, and importance. — Thus a dark night may precede a bright and glorious day — the inclemency of winter makes room, for the beauty and verdure of spring — and providences, to the beginning of whole acquaintance we are most reluctant, may take their farewel with a benign and winning aspect.

P A R T II.

FROM the whole we infer, that it is wrong in good people, to determine, because the ways of God's providence are for the present distressing, that therefore their issue will be unfavourable. His engagements to his children, and unremitted care of all their concerns, encourage
courage

courage them to say, whatever befalls them, *If God be for us, who can be against us?*^y — Whence then arise,

II. Surmises of a contrary nature, in their breasts; and whence proceed such exclamations, as that in the text, *All these things are against me?* — Why,

1. From pretent feelings. — God has, for the purpose of stimulating to self-preservation, implanted in our frame a sensibility of pain. Pain therefore is disagreeable to flesh and blood, and affliction, more or less, an oppression; nor does an inconvenience that is unfelt deserve the epithet of distress. It is not surprising, then, that when pain approaches, the mind shrinks back — that its retreat is in proportion to the magnitude of the dreaded object — or that, situated as God's people are in this world, divine grace does not set them above the feelings of grief. The sin lies not here (for even *Jesus wept*)^z but in the intemperate indulgence of grief. We may sorrow, but not as those who are hopeless, because
without

^y Rom. viii. 31.

^z John xi. 35.

without God in the world. — The workings of the mind of a godly man, however, may put such a dark construction upon present afflictions, either from the mind's own inexperience, or from the suddenness, or intricacy of the trial. That son of the prophets, who first saw the army of Syria, which encompassed Elisha in Dothan, was a young man; he had not gone through the difficulties his master had encountered; and, therefore, immediately cried out, *Alas, my master, how shall we do?* Whereas the prophet answered coolly, and, as he afterwards proved, reasonably, *Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.*^a — But it is not strange, when the stroke is heavy and unexpected, that even a man of experience should, upon the first impression, be ready to conclude, “I am ruined.” — “This stroke will sink me.” “I shall never more hold up my head.” — And more especially, when blow after blow is repeated, perhaps with redoubled force, and time is scarcely left for one wound to cease bleeding, before

^a 2 Kings vi. 16.

fore a fresh wound is given, or the former rent open again, and its agony renewed. In similar circumstances, we have seen Jacob drawing the black inference our text contains.—And yet, methinks, though the confusion of his ideas, at this instant, affected him to so great a degree, if consideration had had its due place, such would not have been the deliberate reasoning of his mind.—We observe, therefore,

2. That misapprehensions of God's goodness proceed, also, from unmindfulness of past mercies.—It might have occurred to Jacob, how remarkably God had at Bethel met with him, an outcast from his father's house, and how exactly all the promises he made were fulfilled.—It might have occurred, that God preserved him from the fraudulent attempts of Laban, when he changed his wages ten times, and from his open violence, when he pursued him with an armed force.^b—It might have occurred, that, through God's merciful guidance, he escaped from Esau who sought his life, and that he afterwards

^b Genesis xxxi. 41.

wards turned Esau's heart to him, when he trembled most for fear of him.^c — It might have occurred, how *as a prince he had had power with God*, and by his supplications *prevailed*, from whence he obtained the name of Israel, with the like promises that were made to Abraham and Isaac.^d — All these particulars, if recollected, might have alleviated his concern for Joseph, whom he supposed dead; and raised a hope in his mind, that, dark as affairs looked at present, the faithful God would, in some way or other, over-rule them all for his benefit. *I remembered thy judgments of old, O Lord, and have comforted myself,*^e said David. It is greatly to be regretted, that, from a regard to God's glory and our own comfort, *the years of the right-hand of the most High*^f are not dwelt on, and laid up in the mind, to be of use as occasion requires. The Apostle complains, to the Hebrews, *Ye have forgotten the exhortation, which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord,*
nor

^c Gen. xxvii. 43.—xxxiii. 4. ^d Gen. xxxv. 10.

^e Psalm cxix. 52.

^f Psalm lxxvii. 10.

nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.^g
Hence, one true reason may be assigned, why, when distress comes to people, it is an enemy they are not prepared to combat with, and they *faint in the day of adversity*.^h——To which may be added,

3. Unbelief. — And this, as it receives support from unmindfulness of God's former care, so it strives to undervalue what God has done, and weaken every comfortable inference, that can be drawn from a recollection thereof.——May it not hence be accounted for, why christians are sometimes so resigned, at other times so miserable, under the chastening hand of God? — Let faith be in exercise — faith, fixed upon the fulness of the redemption of Jesus Christ — the freedom of his love — the abundant encouragement to trust in him — the unbounded extent of his promises, to the souls that seek him; and his power and faithfulness to fulfil every word he has spoke — I say, let faith be fixed on these truths, and corroborated by a believing remembrance of what God has done for the soul in particular,
and

^g Heb. xii. 5.

^h Prov. xxiv. 10.

and you may behold the christian, with tears in his eyes smiling at grief — *as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing*ⁱ — *counting it all joy, when he falls into divers temptations*^k — at least, lying at the foot-stool of God's throne; “*Not as I will, but as thou wilt.*”^l *The cup which my father hath given me shall I not drink it?*”^m “*Behold, Here am I, let him do to me, as seemeth good unto him.*”ⁿ — Happy soul! *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed trusting in the Lord.*^o But let the heart depart from the living God^p — let unbelief have but a temporary sway in the soul, and the same individual will be over-burdened with a comparatively light affliction. If the consolations of God are set before him, alas! they are small unto him. He doubts — demurs — hesitates — feeds upon his own melancholy — is unwilling to accept of rest for his soul. “*The gospel yields comfort to be sure, he says, but does it reach my case? Its promises are large*”
“and

ⁱ 2 Cor. vi. 10. ^k James i. 2. ^l Mat. xxvi. 39.

^m John xviii. 11.

ⁿ 2 Sam. xv. 26.

^o Psalm xii. 7.

^p Heb. iii. 12.

“ and wide ; — they relate to this world,
 “ and that which is to come ; but do
 “ they belong to me ? I thought so once ;
 “ but may I not have been deceived ? I
 “ once hoped my experience was saving ;
 “ but ah ! what has occurred since ? God
 “ has been very merciful in former times ;
 “ but ah ! my unfruitful, wandering heart !
 “ — My carelessness ! — My love of
 “ earthly things ! — How unworthily have
 “ I acted ! — Can I have had the real posses-
 “ sion of the grace of God ? May not this
 “ visitation be in wrath, not mercy —
 “ the beginning of sorrows to me ? ” —
 Piteous case indeed ! We remember the
 wormwood and the gall, and are taught
 to weep with you, and pray for you.
 — May God, most High, irradiate your
 mind — dispel your darkness — and make
 his face to shine upon you ! — In such
 a distrustful frame, the whole Bible is a
 blank ; no precious promise can the soul
 fasten upon, from whence to derive com-
 fort ; and no wonder it concludes, *All*
these things are against me. — We must
 mention, in like manner,

4. Impatience, as another cause of mis-
 appre-

apprehensions of God's proceedings. — What opinion should we form of a sick man, who, the moment the remedy is administered, pronounces upon its inefficacy, because he has not immediate ease? That he is impatient, and will not wait for the operation of the medicine. — It is an opinion equally just, of the man who repines when God rebukes him. — The Lord *declares*, and thereby evinces, that he beholds, *the end of his works from the beginning.*¹ We are short-sighted creatures, who can descry but a very little of his counsel; and that only as far as he is pleased to divulge it. *It is good, therefore, that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of God.*² The former is the root of the latter. The language of the opposite spirit is, “*This evil is of the Lord: Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?*”³ Or if afraid of replying so openly and barefacedly, impatience will, at least, clothe its murmurings with the words of our text; language that, its principle properly investigated, is as proud and conceited, as undutiful,

¹ Isa. xlv. 10. ² Lam. iii. 26. ³ 2 Kings vi. 33.

dutiful, unreasonable, and unavailable; — proud, because it arraigns God's wisdom or veracity, and goes upon the overweening supposition, that our own management would be better than his; — undutiful, because we are under the highest obligations to him, as our sovereign and benefactor; — unreasonable, as the very notion of mercy implies, that we have no right to the least of his blessings; — unavailable, because *the counsel of God shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure* * — Now, from what has been said, of the causes of misconceptions of God's dealings with his people, may be deduced in part,

III. The proper and necessary defence against them; — in general, that it consists in a temper and conduct, directly opposite to that unmindfulness of past favours, and distrust of God's goodness, which are the root of impatience under his hand. — Those who have entered practically into the christian scheme, are supposed to have had the beginning of this opposite

* Isaiah xlv. 10.

opposite disposition, supernaturally wrought in their hearts ; and for its greater growth, strength and vigour, there are certain means God has appointed us, to be found in the use of. As,

1. It is a very necessary part of duty, to watch against the anxious, and carnal reasonings of the mind. *Be anxiously careful for nothing*, said the Apostle, *but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God ;* ^u and perhaps this will give us one pertinent view, of what he adds, concerning *the peace of God which passeth all understanding* — that it is more excellent, and will do the soul more good, than all the fearful apprehensions, and anxious cares, proceeding naturally from the human heart. The propriety of the observation strikes at first sight. These reasonings perplex the soul, take it off from its dependance on God, and thinking of him with delight, encumber it about many things, eat out much of its spirituality, and unfit it for the due exercise of prayer and praise. — How cold, how languid,

^u Phil. iv. 6.

languid, how wandering, have our hearts been ; how lifeless, how uncomfortable, and insipid our services, under their chilling influence ! Whereas the property of the peace of God, is to settle and *keep the heart and mind* in a becoming frame. These considerations teach us the usefulness of watching against sinful cares, and hint at the true method of opposing them. — But still it remains to be enquired, When the thoughts of the mind may be so denominated ? “ Prudence, “ you say, must be used, and indolence “ is not to take place of diligence.” — True. But when is prudence laudable — when culpable ? Are your difficulties of such a kind, that it is probable, your prudence and circumspection can extricate you ? Whatsoever your hand findeth to do, do it with all your might ; but strive also to leave your success quietly with him, who directs the issues of life and all its complicated engagements. — Or, is your case, like Jacob's, so bewildered, that the measure of understanding you are possessed of fails of affording you relief ? Yet *why art*
N *thou*

thou cast down ; and thy heart disquieted within thee ? It is too soft a term, for the uneasiness, the despondency you indulge, in consequence of your disappointments, to say that prudence dictates it. — No. — Say it proceeds from the rebellion of the heart. — Prudence advises to *hope still in God, that we shall yet praise him, as the health of our countenance and our God.*^w — I am well aware, of the reluctance of the mind, in such seasons, to entertain ideas more pleasing : but surely duty calls upon us, to labour to detach our thoughts from reflections, which have only the power to distract and torment, not the power of alleviating the pain, or healing the malady. — For this purpose, therefore,

2. Another duty presents itself. — Converse much with the promises of God. — The mind will be employed about something. As, therefore, you wish to guard against hurtful thoughts, let your memory be exercised with thoughts which may be profitable. Frequently read over the promises of God. See the loving-kindness

^w Psalm xliii. 5.

kindness of God therein. Seek to have a competent satisfaction of your own interest in them. Have you a *good hope through grace*?^x Thank God for it, and behold what a large catalogue of mercies falls to your share. *The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold, from them that walk uprightly.*^y — Are you doubtful of your interest in these blessings? Yet be not regardless of it; you know not the moment you may find your need of such satisfaction. — Jesus, the friend of sinners, still lifts up the standard of his gospel. As a sinner apply to him, for an heart sensible of sin, faith to appropriate to yourself the great things he has wrought, and holiness, the fruit of faith, and effect of renewing grace. Wait on him for further discoveries of his love; and through him, *the author and finisher of faith*,^z view the promises of the Bible, and endeavour, that some sweet assurance of God's care may be continually upon your heart, the pleasant topic of your meditation in the

N 2 intervals

^x 2 Thess. ii. 16.

^y Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

^z Heb. xii. 2.

intervals of business, and a guard against the tribes of impertinent intruders, which seek access, only to steal and to destroy.

— It is a proper caution also,

3. To beware of worldly-mindedness, and of sin. — There are but few tasks more difficult, or more important, than to convince men, of the nature of worldly-mindedness, or what the Apostle styles, *covetousness, which is idolatry.*^a It is so deceitful and so pernicious a vice: It puts on so specious and alluring a form, while it cheats many out of their comforts, and more out of their souls. — “Business must be minded — the family provided for — great attention is requisite — all the world acknowledges, that if the trade is neglected it will be lost.” — Who disputes so just an argument? But it is criminal, when the affairs of life are suffered to jostle out, the constant dependance of the soul upon God — when encreasing schemes divert the mind from duty — when the man seeks rather his own gratification, than the honour of the most High, in what he possesses

^a Col. iii. 5.

fesses — when new acquisitions create new wants, and whirl the soul around, that it knows not where to stop — when, the natural effect of the former particulars, the soul declines insensibly into a sleepy secure frame, and carries a barren heart under the decent form of godliness — or, when there is added to the former the indulgence of immoderate pleasure, and of amusements, in themselves vain and sinful. *The friendship of the world is enmity with God,*^b has undone multitudes, and hindered numbers who set out well. As it draws away the heart from God, it nourishes unbelief, and betrays the soul into its power. Thus they that will be rich are exposed to temptation, and often have *pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*^c Affliction teaches the vanity of earthly things, and the usefulness of a life of religion. It was *David's* happiness, that when he was *greatly distressed*, he could *encourage himself in the Lord his God.*^d But what will give that man encouragement, who has sinned away his comforts? What support him in the de-

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fert,

^b James iv. 4. ^c 1 Tim. vi. 10. ^d 1 Sam. xxx. 6.

fert, who has spent his money for that which is not bread, and his labour for that which is not? — How is the backslider in heart filled with his own ways! How bitterly does he lament, that he has sowed to the flesh, and of the flesh reaped corruption — followed after lying vanities, and forsaken his own mercies! — As then the hour of trial is uncertain, and you wish not to be borne away with its rapidity, let not prosperity delude you to undervalue that presence and blessing, which, in the truest sense, maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow unto it. — Once more,

4. To give efficacy to all the former directions, let prayer be intermingled; for as all our safety and support must be derived, ultimately, from God, the proper notion of the means of grace is to be in a suitable posture, for the reception of that grace, which may render our strength equal to our day. While, therefore, we watch, the consciousness of our own weakness teaches to pray, lest we enter into temptation — while we meditate on the promises of God, to pray for their comfortable

comfortable application to the soul. While we gird on the gospel armour, prayer is that which, by engaging the Lord on our side, joins the several parts together and makes them impenetrable — teaches our hands to war and our fingers to fight — enables the soul to *stand in the evil day, and having done all to stand* — makes us conquerors, yea and more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us.^e Pray, then, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, watching thereunto (for every opportunity, and against every interruption of prayer, with all perseverance.^f — This is the method, of becoming proof against our enemies, who would weaken our strength in the way — of being comfortable, by living in submission to the will of God — the method, whereby the *trial of our faith may be found unto praise and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ,*^g by its happy influence, to further our progress in the divine life, and forward our advances to that world, where the righteous shall enter into peace, and rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.

^e Rom. viii. 37. ^f Eph. vi. 18. ^g 1 Pet. i. 7.

rightness.^h — What a difference does the love of God make in the state, and in all that respects the man! Here, even his sharpest sorrows work out for him, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. — On the other hand, the very prosperity of the wicked is their destruction, as its tendency, is through their abuse, to harden their hearts, and ripen them for that dismal reverse of joy — that never-ending agony, which must necessarily result from an eternal deprivation of their present gratifications, joined to an everlasting sense of that wrath, which they are now eagerly treasuring up, unto the day of wrath. Mistaken souls! In you is fulfilling the word of the Lord, *I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart.*ⁱ — Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner.^k If the righteous are in heaviness through manifold temptations, it is because they have sin in them, and need to be purified from it. And if they have their full measure of trouble
here

^h Isa. lvii. 2. ⁱ Mal. ii. 2. ^k Prov. xi. 31.

here below, and in this sense *are* but *scarcely*, though certainly *saved*, *where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear* ;¹ when death, the last drop of the cup of bitterness the christian shall drink, is to the unbeliever the beginning of sorrows ? May these solemn reflections be blessed, for awakening you to consider your latter end, and producing in you the peaceable fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus, to the praise and glory of God ! Amen !

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 18.

H Y M N.

I.

TO God I cry'd with mournful voice,
 I sought his gracious ear,
 In the sad day, when troubles rose,
 And fill'd the night with fear.

II.

Sad were my days, and dark my nights,
 My soul refus'd relief ;
 I thought on God the Just and Wise,
 But thoughts increas'd my grief.

III. Will

III.

Will God for ever cast me off?
His promise ever fail?
Has he forgot his tender love?
Shall anger still prevail?

IV.

But I forbid this hopeless thought,
This dark, despairing frame,
Rememb'ring what thy hand hath wrought;
Thy hand is still the same.

V.

I'll think again of all thy ways,
And talk thy wonders o'er,
Thy wonders of recov'ring grace,
When flesh could hope no more.

3 NO 63

THE END OF VOL. I.



